

OBAMA DIVIDED AGAINST HIMSELF? ■ SURVIVING IN MOSUL

MARCH 26, 2007

The American Conservative

To Russia with Realism

The Case Against
A New Cold War



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THREE CHEERS TWICE

I must congratulate you on an exceptional edition (Feb. 26). Michael Vlahos's "The Fall of Modernity" and Patrick McNamara's "The God Gene" are by themselves worth a year's subscription.

JOSE R. PARDINAS, Ph.D.
San Diego, Calif.

A JOKING AFFAIR

I know that *The American Conservative* will come in for more than its fair share of criticism for having published the last Taki column ("Foreign Affairs Advice," Feb. 26). Personally, as an old-fashioned Episcopalian, I found it somewhat amusing. My reaction is not dissimilar to my standard comment about Calvinism: "It's a fine thing as long as you don't confuse it with religion." Taki's "tips" are fine as long as you take them for the tongue-in-cheek prank that they are. Watch out for a chorus of howls from our Protestant brethren. Some folks can never take a joke!

RICHARD HINES
Mayesville, S.C.

WISDOM OVER WIT

I was shocked and saddened to read Taki's article in the Feb. 26 issue. I've noticed crude sexual remarks in previous columns but overlooked them as passing comments. But this was over the top. There are many things wrong in America, with the main one being that we have lost our Christian compass. Many men already act and think like Taki, and we don't need *TAC* making it look legitimate. *TAC* is the one source for articles with some depth and wisdom. Evidently, Taki has not learned that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I can no longer recommend *TAC* to my conservative friends.

KIRBY BISCHER
Georgetown, Ky.

WHITE STRIPPERS WANTED

Richard Bertrand Spencer's "Rotten in Durham" (Feb. 26) is an adroit analysis of the pathology of politically correct

professors in academe. Moreover, since Spencer is currently a doctoral student at Duke University, his article is certainly a brave gesture that will undoubtedly incur the wrath of the cultural Marxists on campus. One additional and important point that I wish he had included in the piece: the lacrosse players specifically asked for two white strippers. When told that two whites were not available, the players grudgingly agreed that the second stripper could be Asian. What do these facts do to the "exploitation-of-the-black-female" paradigm promoted by the politically correct?

ROGER D. MCGRATH
Thousand Oaks, Calif.

BRANDEIS BULLY

I credit Philip Weiss for his refreshingly even-handed account of President Carter's visit to Brandeis University (Feb. 26). But I was disturbed by his characterization of Alan Dershowitz's response to students' comments that the election of the Hamas needed to be respected and that Dershowitz was excessive in his frequent references to Nazi Germany.

Far from being "brilliant," Dershowitz's response appeared to be a cheap maneuver more in keeping with his role as a trial lawyer than as a Harvard professor. As the latter, he could have asked the first student whether a democratic election was sufficient to legitimize an organization guilty of crimes against humanity. This way, he would at least have confronted her with a genuine ethical dilemma and left the door open for further discussion. By simply comparing her to an appeaser of Hitler, he not only demonized her unjustly and shut off further discussion but knowingly misrepresented reality, since there are obvious reasons that his analogy is utterly absurd.

Similarly, it doesn't sound to me that the second student, who sat down, "punctured," was in fact subdued by brilliance but rather by the reality that he was an inexperienced student up against a world-class demagogue. This

example of Dershowitz's conduct is just another reason Carter was justified in refusing to engage him in debate, a task better left to less gracious and more aggressive opponents such as Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein.

ART SPENCER
Columbia, Md.

BEYOND HIPPIES

In his commentary on the Jan. 27 antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., Michael Brendan Dougherty provides an answer to why the peace movement is not larger and more influential (Feb. 26). Most of his article delights in stereotyping the Left, from an earnest young Trotskyite to a middle-aged couple trying to dance their way back to youth. These are easy marks and well-worn tropes. But Dougherty barely notices that there were no Libertarians, no traditional Conservatives, and not even any Greens on the speakers platform. The reason is that they were not invited. I know because I worked hard to get Justin Raimondo and Ron Paul invitations. What Dougherty saw, but did not understand, was the takeover of United For Peace and Justice, the center of the antiwar movement, by the other War Party, the Democrats.

All attempts to get this "official" peace movement to include elements stretching beyond the Democratic Party are rebuffed. I am told that "those Libertarians are no more than a lot of selfish folks." In other words, stereotypes—simply the flip side of Dougherty's. And if we do not abandon those stereotypes in favor of intelligent alliances, we shall never defeat empire. "Divide and conquer" works as well on us as it does on the Shia and Sunni.

JOHN V. WALSH, M.D.
Worcester, Mass.

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REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE



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BARGAINING TIME?

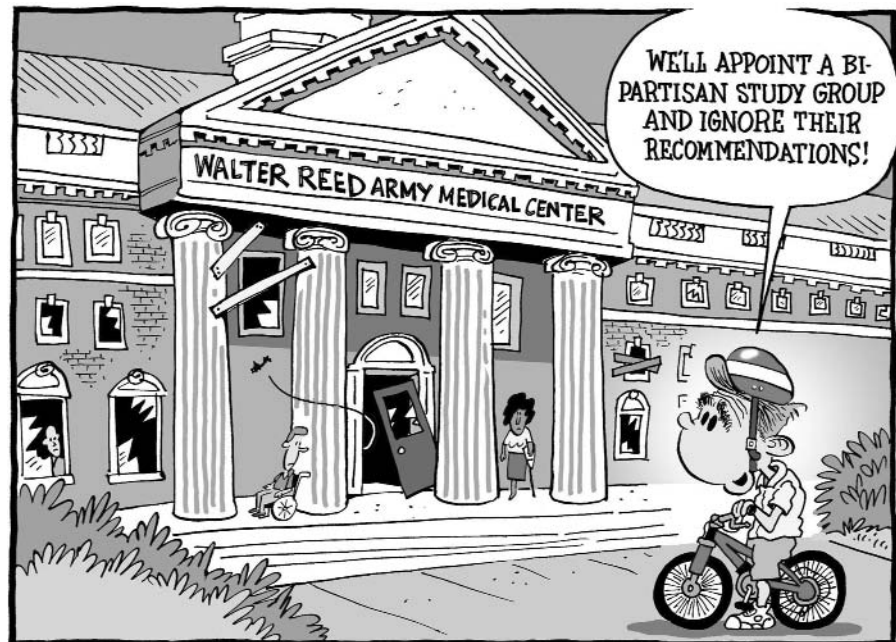
It is still early to assess the import of Condoleezza Rice's quiet announcement that representatives from Iran and Syria will attend a conference in Baghdad devoted to stabilizing Iraq—where they will inevitably be negotiating with American representatives.

It is clear that the Bush administration is no fan of negotiations: the president dismissed last year's Iraq Study Group recommendation that the United States talk to Syria and Iran, both of whom have a vital interest in a more stable Iraq.

But the White House may be coming to some realization that the U.S. cannot get the sort of Iraq it wants by military force; that Britain, our only serious ally, is not "surging" troops but withdrawing them; that if American forces are still in the middle of a civil war in 2008, the GOP will go down in flames. If so, that is a kind of realism.

Iran and Syria are hardly friends of the United States. But they are states with concrete interests to protect and legitimate reasons to fear Iraq's collapse into an anarchic, al-Qaeda harboring territory. There are things that they would like from the U.S.—particularly a withdrawal of sanctions and greater access to the global economic system. And there are ways they can help us withdraw safely from Iraq.

The United States has a deadly foe in al-Qaeda, but it certainly doesn't serve America's interests to treat every Muslim country that isn't "moderate" and "pro-Western" as a bitter enemy. Just as the U.S. did not win the Cold War by treating every country that called itself "socialist" with the same unbending hostility, Washington could now use some of the tactical flexibility it had a generation ago. If the Rice announcement foreshadows that, it's welcome and long overdue.



[WAR]

MODERN SHELLSHOCK

The footage was stunning: ABC's charismatic news anchor Bob Woodruff couldn't shape the words "belt buckle." The scars crossing his shaved skull—the left side sunken where an Iraqi IED blast sent shrapnel searing into his brain—told the rest of the story.

Woodruff spent 36 days in a coma. A year later, his recovery is ongoing, but he was well enough to return to ABC recently for a documentary about his ordeal and the brain-injured soldiers he met at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Medical advances save many who would have previously died on the battlefield. But the roadside bomb—this war's signature weapon—is stealing even its survivors' lives. Strapping young Marines are reduced to vacant shells, strangers to their young families. Some speak haltingly, confounded by the simplest tasks. Others will never leave their beds.

They have the worst of it. But we're learning that many who thought they had escaped the deadliest effects are also suffering. The Department of Defense reports some 23,000 wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. But over 200,000 are under the care of the Veterans Administration. VA Secretary Jim

Nicholson avers that many are receiving services as simple as dental care—but cavities aren't causing the mysterious disorientation, motor and speech difficulties, and mood alterations veterans are experiencing with increased frequency. Military doctors now estimate that as many as 10 percent of the 1.5 million soldiers who have circulated through the theater could be brain injured.

We may not know the extent of the damage for years, but in terms of the human toll, it's already too high. Words like "surge" come easily, but before he opens another front, President Bush would do well to spend a few hours with the hero who can no longer tie his shoes or remember his child's name.

[MEDIA]

DISAPPOINTING MRS. BUSH

Laura may be our favorite Bush. She seems the very model of a first lady: pleasant, poised, inclined to rein in W's "dead or alive" showboating, and completely uninterested in health-care reform. But her ease with the talking points has taken a Stepford turn. She told Larry King, "Many parts of Iraq are stable now. But, of course, what we see on television is the one bombing a day that discourages everybody."

The part about war correspondents skipping ribbon-cutting ceremonies is probably true. They're a little busy. For rather than catching that single daily bombing, they're covering some small fraction of the 180 attacks U.S. troops incur on an average day. Add the 50 on Iraqi civilians and 30 on Iraqi forces, and it's worse than discouraging. It's deadly.

[CULTURE]

PROFILING RACISM

In liberal, tolerant, and very multicultural San Francisco, *Asia Week*, a small but respected publication, ran a column entitled "Why I Hate Blacks." All the relevant groups from the Asian American Justice Center to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors condemned the piece, and the publisher has apologized to the NAACP and fired the author, the supervising editor, etc.

Writer Kenneth Eng is a young man who apparently hates a lot of ethnic groups or at least enjoys the edge of saying so. *TAC* favors racial good manners and wields no brief for him. But the imbroglia illustrates a larger point. Ethnic conflict won't end when the number of whites in the U.S. is reduced to a minority, a milestone to be reached about mid-century if immigration continues at current rates. America now possesses a substantial legal and cultural industry devoted to sniffing out improper racial attitudes among white people, then subjecting the miscreants to moral sanction if not legal prosecution. But the blunt fact is that people of different races don't as a rule admire one another and get along, and American whites are not always the worst offenders.

A friend writes that his Chinese wife and her friends use a different and quite hostile language when talking about blacks and other groups in their native Chinese. When they switch to English, the discourse becomes bland and politically correct. It's not obvious which is

the sociologically more relevant discourse. But a word of caution to those who live for the denunciation of white lacrosse players and guys with rebel flag bumper stickers: your stereotypes need an upgrade.

[MEMORIAM]

LAST COLD WAR LIBERAL

Amid the tributes to the late Arthur Schlesinger Jr., we would not want unremarked one praiseworthy aspect of his long career: as perhaps the leading exemplar of an American "liberal anti-communist" intellectual, he never walked away from the anti-communist part when it became unfashionable, never promoted the idea that the Cold War was much ado about nothing, never claimed that the United States had nothing to fear from domestic communists, who presented a genuine dual-loyalty problem.

In his later years, Schlesinger was a prescient and effective critic of the Iraq War and the Bush presidency. In this magazine's first year of publication, a *TAC* editor slightly acquainted with Schlesinger saw him on the bus that travels from Manhattan to eastern Long Island. The editor gingerly approached the eminent man. "Hello, Dr. Schlesinger. Perhaps you'd like to look at several issues of our new magazine." Arthur took them in hand and read quite thoroughly. When the bus reached Bridgehampton, he offered polite praise (and generously cited *TAC* several months later in a *New York Review of Books* essay). In parting, he said, "Give my best regards to Pat. He knows more American history than anyone else who has ever run for president. Unfortunately, he drew the wrong conclusions from it."

We will miss Schlesinger's essays on the current battle to restore sanity to American foreign policy and admire his life's accomplishment. ■

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Jim Webb vs. The Decider

A year ago, pressed as to why he retained Rumsfeld when the war was going badly and most had lost confidence in him, President Bush famously retorted, "I'm

the decider, and I decide what is best."

For six years, Bush has been "the decider." And though the intelligence was flawed about Saddam's ties to 9/11 and al-Qaeda and about whether he was running a clandestine nuclear-weapons program, Bush decided for war. And a Democratic Senate, with Sens. Clinton, Kerry, Edwards, Daschle, Reed, Dodd, and Biden all assenting, signed Bush's blank check for war.

But there is a new senator in town who believes that, on matters of war and peace, President Bush is not "the decider." Congress is, as the Constitution commands.

President Bush may have issued an ultimatum to Tehran in his "axis-of-evil" address. He may have deployed carriers around the Gulf and sent fighter-bombers to Incirlik. He may have declared that we will not permit Iran to acquire even the knowledge to build nuclear weapons. But he does not have the authority, in and of himself, to carry out that threat. He is a president, not an emperor.

Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia has declared his intent to write legislation to deny funding for President Bush to launch a war on Iran without first getting the approval of Congress. Majority Leader Harry Reid has said he will look favorably on such legislation.

Webb's proposal is based on HJR 14, sponsored by Congressman Walter Jones of North Carolina, who has lined up two dozen members behind his resolution. It declares that in the absence of an Iranian attack on the United States or U.S. forces, or an imminent threat of such an

attack, President Bush has no authority to go to war against Iran.

Both Jones's resolution and Webb's legislation would require the president to follow the Constitution and come to the Congress for authority to go to war, if Bush has decided that national security hangs upon our destroying the facilities associated with Iran's nuclear program. For any constitutionalist or conservative, there should be no question as to where to come down — on the side of Webb and Jones.

Of the major wars in American history, before the modern era, all but two were declared by Congress. The Revolutionary War began at Lexington and Concord at a time America did not exist as a united nation. Lincoln's blockade of the South came after the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter. Congress was out of session.

The break in constitutional tradition came with Korea. In June 1950, Truman ordered General MacArthur to resist the North Korean invasion. The UN Security Council authorized the resistance, Congress voted the funds, but there was no formal declaration of war.

Truman called it a "police action," though ten times as many Americans would die in Korea as have died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lyndon Johnson used a disputed incident in the Tonkin Gulf to stampede the Senate, 88-2, into authorizing him to wage war. As the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had turned eastern Cambodia into a sanctuary and supply base from which to attack South Vietnam and U.S. forces, President Nixon believed he had a

right to bomb and invade those sanctuaries. He did both, in late April of 1970.

Some Democrats considered the U.S. incursion into Cambodia an impeachable act. But that Congress had not the courage to pursue it.

Bush 41 and Bush 43 followed the Constitution and won from Congress authority to go to war against Iraq. Bush 41 stopped before Basra, believing he had no authority to go to Baghdad, and it would be an act of imperial folly to occupy Iraq and take responsibility for ruling Mesopotamia. Bush 43 got from Congress the authority to go all the way — and did exactly that.

Lesson? When Congress declares war, or authorizes war, it cedes immense authority to the commander in chief, and cannot know how the war will end.

Did the Congress of 1917 know that, in two years, Wilson would be sub-dividing Europe and the world and demanding the United States put blood and treasure behind a treaty to guarantee the new borders?

Could the Congress of 1941 have known that, after four years of war against Japan and Germany, we would begin a half century of Cold War to defend Western Civilization against our Soviet "ally"?

What Jones and Webb are asking is that we Americans return to the Constitution, that if we decide it is necessary to send hundreds of thousands of Americans into a new war on Iran, and thousands to their deaths, we do it constitutionally, we do it together, we do it with our eyes wide open this time.

Whatever threat Iran represents, it is not imminent, and may be non-existent. We have no excuse not to do it the constitutional way with Congress, not the president, as the decider. ■

[bear baiting]

To Russia with Realism

The White House senselessly risks a new Cold War.

By Anatol Lieven

AS IF THE U.S. did not have enough on its plate, the latest strongly anti-American statements of President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials suggest the possibility of a new Cold War with Russia. And from the Russian point of view, these statements are only responding to a series of bitterly anti-Russian statements and actions by the Bush administration over the past year, including plans to bring Ukraine into NATO; the speech by Vice President Cheney in Vilnius last July attacking Russia; backing for Georgia in its conflict with Russian-backed breakaway republics; and the latest move to extend American anti-missile defenses to Eastern Europe.

At best, deep mutual hostility between the U.S. and Russia represents a serious distraction from America's infinitely more important and urgent problems elsewhere, including Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the rise of China, and the deterioration of U.S. influence in Latin America. At worst, this tension could lead to Russia arming Iran, joining global energy cartels to put pressure on the West, and inflicting on Washington geopolitical humiliation on the territory of the former Soviet Union. This would occur if the U.S. agreed to defend Ukraine and Georgia as part of NATO and then proved unwilling or unable to defend them when Russia attacked.

For while Russia cannot remotely match America's global power, we

should remember the key lesson of Iraq: all real power—that is, power that can be applied to a particular place and issue—is in the end, local. Russia may no longer be a global superpower, but it is certainly a great power when it comes to Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasus.

And in contrast to the launching of the Cold War, for the U.S. to take these risks is not remotely justified by vital American interests. In the late 1940s, the Soviet Union was the heartland of a revolutionary ideology that threatened to suppress free-market democracy, freedom, and religion across the world and, by dominating Western Europe and East Asia and fomenting revolution in Latin America, to pin the U.S. within its own borders, surround it, and eventually stifle it.

Today's Russia is like many U.S. allies past and present: a corrupt, state-influenced market economy with a partly democratic, partly authoritarian system. Russia has no global agenda of ideological or geopolitical domination but mainly wants to exert predominant influence (but not imperial control) within the territory of the former Soviet Union and the centuries-old Russian empire. Moves by the state to dominate the oil and gas sector are unwelcome to Americans but entirely in line with world practice outside the U.S. and U.K. Russian corruption is extremely serious, but on the other hand, the fiscal restraint of the Putin administration holds lessons for the present U.S. administration, not

the other way around. Like India, Turkey, and many other democratic states, Russia has used brutal means to suppress a separatist rebellion.

Like Turkey for several decades when it was a member of NATO, Russia combines an increasingly independent judiciary and respect for the rule of law with selective repression (both formal and covert) against individuals seen as threats to the state or the ruling elite. The media scene is rather like India until the 1980s—a combination of state domination of television with a free and vocal, but much less influential, print media.

Above all, when it comes to the main lines of its foreign and domestic policy, the Putin administration has the support of the vast majority of ordinary Russians, while the Russian pro-Western liberals we choose to call "democrats" are supported by a tiny minority—mostly because of their association with the disastrous "reforms" of the 1990s. Thus, far from rallying democratic support in Russia, American attacks on Putin in the name of democracy only foment the anger of ordinary Russians against the United States. It does not help when criticism of Russia's record on democracy and freedom comes from that notorious defender of human rights Dick Cheney or when these statements are immediately followed by warm and public American embraces of even more notorious ex-Soviet democrats like President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan.

Russia today is by no means a pretty picture, but to compare it in terms of repression and state control with the Soviet Union—or indeed with contemporary China—is grotesque. We should remember that as late as the summer of 1989, a Soviet leader who envisioned Russia as it now exists would have been received with incredulous joy by the West as representing a future beyond our most optimistic dreams. And at that time a Western policymaker who advocated such megalomaniacal, horribly dangerous projects as drawing Ukraine and Georgia into an anti-Russian military alliance, and taking responsibility for their security, would have been regarded as completely insane.

On two recent occasions, I have assumed that U.S. hostility to Russia, and anti-Russian U.S. geopolitical agendas, would largely evaporate. The first time was immediately after 9/11, when the extent of the murderous threat of Islamist extremism to the U.S. was fully revealed. It seemed self-evident that the American political elites would automatically reconsider their attitude toward Russia. After all, since the end of the Cold War, Russia had not been responsible for the death of a single American or threatened a single truly vital American interest and had itself suffered terribly from Islamist terrorism.

The second time was in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq as the extent of the debacle there, and of America's military overstretch, became fully apparent. Once again, it seemed that U.S. policymakers would instinctively wish to reduce their military commitments accordingly or at the very least not seek to undertake any new ones—especially given the rise of Chinese military power, and the threat to Taiwan, in the Far East.

As we know, things have not turned out that way. Instead, hostility to Russia in the Bush administration, both parties in Congress, and the American media has

only grown. So too have American ambitions vis-à-vis Russia. Last year, the administration, with the full support of the Democrats, was pushing an offer of a NATO membership action plan for Ukraine at NATO's summit in Riga, in the face of private Russian threats of drastic retaliation including a massive program of arming Iran against the U.S.

The case of Ukraine and NATO is worth considering as a prime example of the deep irrationality affecting U.S. policy in the former Soviet Union. For it is not just a question of Ukrainian NATO membership infuriating Russia, real though that threat is—and understandable. After all, the Russians have lost far more men fighting in Ukraine in various wars than have died in all of America's wars put together, and the Russian flag was flying over the naval port of Sevastopol before the United States was even created. Even more important are two more facts almost never mentioned in the American debate on this subject—if one can call it a debate. The first is that according to every reliable opinion poll, the great majority of Ukrainians do not even want NATO membership. They are convinced that far from bringing Ukraine greater security, inclusion in the alliance would lead to fierce internal divisions and potentially even split up their country, as well as vastly increase the threat from Russia.

Leaving aside the deep historical and cultural ties between much of Ukraine and Russia, Ukrainians are well aware of how economically dependent their country is on Russia and how little by comparison the West has done to help them. Until it was reduced at the start of 2006, Russia's annual gas subsidy to Ukraine was worth more than four times as much (between \$3 and \$5 billion dollars) as the whole of U.S. aid to Ukraine in the five years since 2000 (less than \$800 million). Millions of Ukrainians work legally in Russia and send their

families remittances, which contribute immensely to the Ukrainian economy. By contrast, only a handful of Ukrainians receive work visas for the U.S. and the European Union.

The second fact is that if Ukraine does become a member of NATO, the U.S. cannot defend it. Given American commitments in the Middle East, where is Washington to find another army with which to defend Ukraine? Would any American administration be prepared to re-introduce the draft in order to defend Ukraine? If it did, would any Congress agree? And even if one can imagine this happening in some parallel geopolitical universe, is there any chance that American troops would be used to shoot demonstrators in eastern and southern Ukraine calling for their regions to break away from Ukraine in order to remain allied with Russia?

This entire plan for Ukrainian NATO membership violates one of the most fundamental rules of strategy: never make an important, visible commitment that you already know you will not be able to keep in a crisis but from which you cannot withdraw without terrible humiliation. Above all, don't do this if your move is actually going to increase the threat of crisis. To make false promises of this kind is not only deeply reckless, it is also deeply unethical.

The Bush administration knew that if it had offered to suspend the extension of NATO membership, Russia would in return have become much more helpful in stopping Iran's nuclear program. Yet it was not opposition in Washington that led to the Ukrainian "Membership Action Plan" being shelved last year, for there was almost none. Only the collapse of the pro-Western "Orange" coalition that took power in Ukraine in 2004, and the return to the premiership of the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych, led to this project being suspended. As a result, the U.S. has infuriated Russia

while gaining precisely nothing from the whole business.

All this was well known to experts on the former Soviet Union and to many American officials, and many of them were willing to admit as much in private. Why then did they not speak out against it? Why was there almost no public opposition to further NATO expansion in Washington?

The behavior of America's political and media elites with regard to Russia shows some of the same mixture of fanaticism and cowardice that afflicts the U.S. "debate" on the Middle East. Powerful elements are obsessed with particular loyalties and hatreds. Others, with no particular axes to grind but passionately concerned with their own careers, are cowed into silence by the prevailing atmosphere.

RUSSIA "**BETRAYED THE MAGIC**," THE SET OF BELIEFS FORMING THE IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF **AMERICA'S GLOBAL EMPIRE** SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND USED TO **JUSTIFY THE COSTS** OF THAT EMPIRE TO **THE U.S. PUBLIC**.

This combination was seen in last year's Council on Foreign Relations report on Russia, several of whose signatories would almost certainly not have put their names on this arrogant and insulting document if they had not felt intimidated by their superiors and the general Beltway mood. In the case of the non-debate on NATO membership of Ukraine, once the leaders of both the Republicans and Democrats had committed themselves to this, no Washington expert who hoped for a job in the next administration—i.e. most of them—was going to raise his or her voice in protest. This is the way that most of the Washington think-tank world works.

This leads to the question of why the general U.S. mood toward Russia is so bad, especially when contrasted with attitudes toward China, a much more

authoritarian state and a much more threatening future rival. Part of the reason is obviously the Cold War, in which the Soviet Union—not Russia, but too many people in the West never made the distinction—was the principal enemy. Out of the Cold War came the particular influence in Washington of Polish, Baltic, and West Ukrainian lobbies, with ethnic hatreds of Russia that long predate their countries' subjection to Soviet Communism. And unlike the case of China, the influence of these lobbies is not balanced by a powerful business and financial lobby with massive investments in Russia and therefore a major stake in good relations between Russia and the U.S.

Finally, there seems to be a particular hatred of Russia on the part of many

tries was utterly committed to escaping the hated domination of Moscow and because the European Union did the heavy lifting in terms of economic aid and institutional transformation. This mixture does not work anywhere else—not in Latin America, not in the Muslim world, and most probably not in China.

In all these places, growing democracy is associated with growing nationalism (or, in Muslim countries, a mixture of this with religious radicalism) and therefore with hostility to the United States. In the case of Russia, it was always quite crazy to think that the Russian public would willingly accept the replacement of Russia by the U.S. as the predominant power in the former Soviet Union, any more than the American public would ever accept the loss of predominant influence in Central America and the Caribbean.

The reaction of Russian society against this American ambition was all the more fierce because radical free-market economic change in the 1990s proved utterly disastrous for ordinary Russians, plunging tens of millions into deep poverty and driving millions to an early death. Ordinary Russians' association of these changes with Western influence was not wholly fair, as the most rapacious and ruthless aspects of the process were the work of the new Russian elites themselves. Nonetheless, the elites justified their actions in the name of "westernization," and the proceeds of Russia's 1990s kleptocracy were to a great extent transferred to Western bank accounts, Western real estate, and Western luxury goods. So the hostile reaction of ordinary Russians is also quite understandable.

In fact, we should be very glad that the Putin administration is as pragmatic as it is in its international policy and as relatively law-abiding at home. During the 1990s, given what was happening to both Russian living standards and Russian

national power and prestige, I and many other Western observers in Russia feared an eruption of outright fascism, with catastrophic results for Russia and the world.

This is one reason that present U.S. attacks on the Putin administration are so over the top. The other is that the post-Cold war era should have begun with a presumption of Russia's innocence on the part of the West. After all, two years before it collapsed the Soviet Union had already withdrawn peacefully from Eastern Europe on the informal promise that these countries would not be incorporated into NATO. This withdrawal removed the original *casus belli* of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West, which began not because of anything that the Soviet state was doing within its own borders but because of its domination of European states beyond its borders in ways that were clearly menacing to Western Europe and vital American interests there.

Moreover, all the repressions and conflicts that accompanied and followed the fall of the Soviet Union put together pale next to those that attended the end of the French and British empires, both of them ruled at the time by Western democracies. One forgotten French campaign in Madagascar alone was estimated by the French military to have cost 89,000 dead, the vast majority civilians. The British suppression of a minor rebellion in Kenya may have cost up to 100,000 lives according to two recent British studies.

Millions more died in Indochina, Algeria, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent as a result of colonial wars or post-colonial civil wars and ethnic cleansing. And with the exception of Algeria, the British and French wars to preserve their empires, like the U.S. wars in the Muslim world today, took place thousands of miles from the shores

of Britain and France. The Chechen wars have taken place on Russia's own sovereign territory. The valid parallel is not Iraq but past U.S. campaigns against the Native Americans in North America itself.

Before the Soviet Union collapsed, most Western observers confidently predicted that the Soviet establishment and the Russian people would fight to the death rather than allow Ukraine and other areas to become independent. Nothing of the sort occurred. In Kazakhstan, more than 10 million Russians were incorporated in the independent state of Kazakhstan without a single act of violent protest or armed intervention by Moscow.

But instead of this leading to Russia beginning the post-Cold War period with a presumption of innocence in the West, from the day that the Soviet Union collapsed—and while Soviet troops were still withdrawing from eastern Europe and the Baltic states—prominent voices in the West simply continued previous rhetorical lines about how both the former Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia embodied permanent Russian drives toward empire and aggression.

Thus George Will declared in 1996, "Expansionism is in the Russians' DNA," and Peter Rodman stated in 1994, "The only potential great-power security problem in Central Europe is the lengthening shadow of Russian strength, and NATO has the job of counter-balancing it. Russia is a force of nature; all this is inevitable." This was despite the fact that since the end of the Soviet Union no leading Russian figure, with the exception of the clownish Zhirinovsky, had expressed the slightest desire to dominate Central Europeans. On the contrary, the overwhelming sentiment in Russia was that past attempts to do so had been a dreadful mistake.

As Nikolas Gvosdev, editor of *The National Interest*, has acutely pointed out, a critical problem in relations between Russia and the U.S. since the

fall of the Soviet Union has been that Americans have interpreted that collapse, and the Russian withdrawal from empire, as a straight Russian defeat and U.S. victory akin to the American victory over Germany and Japan in 1945. Russians, on the other hand, have always seen it as a deal in which they gave up enormous territories and influence in return for promises of Western partnership and massive economic assistance, neither of which was forthcoming.

In the eyes of Russians, their withdrawal from anti-American strategies in Central America, Africa, and elsewhere was predicated on an assumption that the U.S. and its allies would not seek to destroy their interests in the former Soviet Union. As a former Soviet officer once put it to me, "If we had known what you had in store for us, do you really think that we would have let the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc fall to pieces in the way that they did? We would have fought to the death to hold on to them, and you would have had another world war on your hands." Present U.S.-Russian hostility won't result in a world war, but the consequences could still be bad enough, especially when it comes to American interests—and American lives—in the Middle East.

The U.S. political establishment therefore needs to do two things when it comes to formulating policy toward Russia. The first is to remove emotional attitudes deriving from the Cold War and instead approach Russia in the same spirit of pragmatism that the U.S. addresses China. The second is to think hard and clearly about what are truly America's most important interests with regard to Russia and what are secondary or minor interests.

A truly objective analysis along these lines would lead to an identification of the following four vital American interests vis-à-vis Russia, the ones to which the U.S. would devote real effort.

First, to keep Russian weapons and materials of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists and to persuade Russia to prevent potentially dangerous countries like Iran from acquiring such weapons. This means, among other things, much stronger support and funding for the Nunn-Lugar program, designed to enhance the security of Russian nuclear, chemical, and biological sites.

Second, together with Russia, to help prevent Islamist revolution and the creation of safe havens for Islamist terrorists in the Muslim regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Third, to preserve reasonably open international access to the energy reserves of Central Asia and the Caucasus. This requires not just new pipelines but also improved relations with both Russia and Iran.

Fourth, to prevent any outbreak of major new conflict within or between states in the region, with all the suffering that this would involve for the peoples concerned and all the disruptive effects this would have on the world economy and on international stability. This means the U.S. strongly opposing any Russian military intervention in Ukraine and Georgia but also refraining from trying to draw them into an anti-Russian military bloc, as both these moves are likely to lead to regional conflict.

In other words, the U.S. needs to develop a strategy toward Russia tailored to real American interests and real American strength. Surely the country that produced George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Dwight Eisenhower must still be capable, somewhere in its being, of this kind of strategic wisdom? ■

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The March 1 naming of American Enterprise Institute board member Eliot A. Cohen as counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice demonstrates all too clearly that while the neoconservatives might be down, they are far from out

in terms of their near complete control of the Bush White House's foreign policy relating to the Middle East. Cohen, who has frequently been called upon to advise the White House, has been oddly described as a critic of Iraq policy despite being much more a cheerleader. Cohen's criticism has been limited to the standard neoconservative revisionist view that there were errors made by others in the occupation of Iraq, never a concession that the whole venture was itself ill-advised and ultimately catastrophic for the United States.

Cohen's appointment reportedly came about to satisfy neoconservative critics who felt they lacked a voice at the State Department. Rice would have preferred a counselor who was less ideologically encumbered than Cohen, but she was forced by the White House to accept him.

Cohen, for all his academic credentials, has demonstrated a flair for emotion-laced hyperbole. He was one of the first neocons after 9/11 calling for action against Saddam Hussein because he had "helped al-Qaeda." He has also dubbed the current conflict against terrorism "World War IV" and has called for the removal of "the mullahs" in Iran.

In July 2005, Cohen, one of only two prominent neocons with children in the military, supported his Army officer son's impending departure for Iraq in an op-ed riddled with factual errors. He asserted that Baghdad had a "desire to resume suspended weapons programs," something manifestly at odds with the evidence, and envisioned a utopian Iraq that would be a beacon for "decent government and basic freedoms" that could "inspire other changes in the Arab Middle East."

In April 2006, he led the smearing of the Mearsheimer and Walt paper on the Israel lobby with a *Washington Post* op-ed linking the piece with ex-Klansman David Duke in the very first paragraph and then dismissing it as anti-Semitic. He described the scholarship as "inept, even kooky," while making no serious effort to refute evidence of the lobby's undeniable influence. He concluded his case by punching all available hot buttons, resorting to Samuel Johnson's "last refuge of a scoundrel" and exhibiting his son, home from Baghdad to celebrate Passover with his family.

Cohen predictably dismisses the Iraq Study Group, describing its work as "fatuous." He rejects any negotiations with Iran and Syria because they "have filled ... the burn wards at Walter Reed ... and the cemetery at Arlington," an assertion that borders on fantasy.

He will join fellow administration neocons Elliott Abrams, David Wurmser, and Abe Shulsky. Abrams manipulates Middle Eastern policy at the NSC, while Wurmser does the same for Vice President Cheney. Shulsky, a veteran of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans that lied about Iraq, now heads the Iranian Directorate, where he is presumably lying about Iran.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

Auditioning Reagans

The GOP presidential contenders make their case for the Right's affection.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

AS CONSERVATIVE movement hands—old survivors and college Republicans—registered at the Conservative Political Action Conference, it was clear that Mitt Romney had turned this annual confab into a mini-convention. Around each corner of the labyrinthine first floor of the Omni Shoreham were dark haired, bright-eyed beauties handing out “Mitt ’08” stickers, and waving blue signs. The Romney campaign helped over 200 College Republicans attend.

Yet for every Romney action there was an equal and opposite reaction. In the tradition of anti-Kerry kitsch, volunteers passed out neon orange and yellow flip-flops with Romney’s name on them, and a man dressed as “Flipper” the dolphin walked around telling anyone who had ears to hear, the truth about Romney.

The youthful rally atmosphere was punctured early and often by notes of distress and despair. Before lunch on the first day, Richard Viguerie, the king of New Right activism and direct-mail fundraising, railed against the corruption of Republicans who “spend and spend and spend our children and grandchildren’s inheritance all for the sole immoral, corrupt purpose of holding onto power.” Viguerie challenged those present to withhold all financial support from the RNC and from the top-tier candidates he deems insufficiently conservative, Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, and Mitt Romney.

As top CPAC donors lined up in front of Secret Service members and metal detectors to hear the vice president, the Leadership Institute gathered two-party malcontents into an unscheduled event.

Rep. Ron Paul’s speech left no part of the federal government unscathed. His soothing Presbyterian lilt couldn’t disguise the radical nature of his message. “The Constitution says you can only mint currency from gold and silver, so I don’t even believe in the Federal Reserve,” he said, almost as if he were explaining basic arithmetic to a first grader. But the crowd seemed to understand that this man was calling for a revolution. They whooped, cheered, and begged him to announce his candidacy for president. Paul kept his cool, and disappeared for the rest of the conference.

After such a strong dose of libertarian tonic, Tom Tancredo sauntered in to inform his supporters that he had just put out an excellent Romeo y Julieta cigar to be there. His tone suggested that he had forgiven the crowd for the offense. He gave an extemporaneous speech on the cult of multiculturalism and the coming difficulties in stopping the passage of amnesty. The fresh-faced troops leaned into his every word. If he had asked them to burn down the building, there is no doubt the Omni would have been consumed by flames within an hour. But Tancredo just wanted another cigar. As he exited the building, a group of young, tough-minded organizers approached him. “Congressman, we have a lot of good people in South Carolina, but the Brownback guys are snapping up a lot of people too. What are you going to do?”

“We can’t compete with \$100 million campaigns,” he replied, “We’ll just do what we can and put the rest in God’s hands. That’s all we can do.” The slightly

dejected entourage walked slowly to the hotel lobby to make party plans for the night.

Tancredo returned the next day to speak from the main stage. To a crowd wearing stickers with a line through “Rudy McRomney,” he denounced not only “hyphenated Americans” but also hyphenated conservatives—“Neos on one side, paleos on the other. Compassionate conservatives here and now common-sense conservatives.” For Tancredo, these ideological deformations had only given us tax increases, entitlement expansions, and Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the House. “Conservatism doesn’t need an adjective, it needs a leader,” he thundered. Calling on conservatives to examine closely those who would court them, he aimed his rhetorical arrows at Romney: “conversions happen on the road to Damascus, not on the road to Des Moines.”

While candidates like Duncan Hunter and Mike Huckabee were received warmly on day two, Rudy was the big-ticket item. Lines to get in stretched through the hallways. Inside, the foot soldiers of the movement crowded in with the elite—imposing men with Confederate flag lapel pins next to David Brooks, fresh from filing his weekend column, and Terry Eastland, publisher of *The Weekly Standard*. As Giuliani entered stage right, hundreds of cell phones held aloft snapped grainy pictures of America’s mayor.

Rudy came prepared. Acknowledging his differences with the crowd on social issues, he intoned, “We agree on 80 percent, disagree on the other 20 percent. I

think I just described your relationship to your husband or your wife.” He moved swiftly to less divisive themes: it’s not “our war on terror, it’s *their* war on us.” A woman in a red pantsuit shook in her seat and exclaimed, “Fabulous!”

He spoke from notes and struck a professorial tone, explaining how he reduced crime in New York not only by implementing innovative policing tactics but by slashing the welfare rolls. He strolled off the stage to a standing ovation and the bulging base line of “New York, New York.”

The crowd had thinned by the time Sam Brownback took the podium, addressing the conference with the gravity and reassuring hand gestures of a group Bible study. Heavy on themes of “righteousness and justice,” it was stump speech as catechism class, and it came out as tough and flat as that

focus-grouped smile and his torso swiveling to catch the teleprompters, Romney touted his ability to fight liberal legislators, saying, “I know how to veto” (unlike Bush). With the demeanor of a Little League coach, he tapped each conservative constituency on the head. Defending marriage, making America secure, balanced budgets, border control. After detailing his successes in business, he gave an “aw shucks” twist to his smile, and says, “Frankly I can’t wait to get my hands on Washington.” There isn’t a soul that doubts him.

As reporters hustled out to get the big Romney applause lines filed from the nearest wi-fi connection, blond bombthrower Ann Coulter took the stage. Over the strains of “Don’t Stop Believin’” at the nearby Romney reception, I got the news that would become the big story out of CPAC 2007. “Ohmigod!”

D.C. area. With a little hip hop and a lot of alcohol, none of the Mainers would wake in time to see Sean Hannity the next morning.

“Where do we stand?” was the question used to introduce the CPAC straw poll results. Though he bussed in nearly 10 percent of the vote, Romney only beat Giuliani by four points. In a combined vote of first and second choice, Giuliani beat Romney by four points and tied with Newt Gingrich. Hypothetically, would attendees choose a self-described Ronald Reagan Republican or a George W. Bush Republican? Only 3 percent chose Bush. “Sorry Mr. President, this movement is still Ronald Reagan’s,” said Tony Fabrizio. Whenever McCain’s name was uttered across the ballroom, it was followed by boos and hissing. He still managed a fifth-place finish at 12 percent.

Newt Gingrich, perhaps the biggest winner of the day, closed the conference. All the announced candidates had entered from backstage, but Newt came in through the back of the ballroom, shaking hands with supporters as if he were president of CPAC itself. His standing ovation lasted several minutes through the strains of “America the Beautiful,” and the temperature in the room rose swiftly. He came bearing “big concepts, big values, and big solutions.” But like most of the conference speeches, he didn’t dwell on the war in Iraq or the record of the current administration. Conservatism existed with Ronald Reagan, and according to each presidential aspirant, it will be revived under their leadership. His normally helmet-like hair tousled, his face redder than ever, Newt easily whipped up the spirits of the tired crowd.

As the doors were opened after his speech, the young Republicans spilled out with sweat on their brows, searching for spring air and directions to the next party, because this one was over. ■

THE ANNOUNCED CANDIDATES HAD ENTERED FROM BACKSTAGE, BUT NEWT CAME IN THROUGH THE BACK OF THE BALLROOM AS IF HE WERE PRESIDENT OF CPAC ITSELF.

sounds. Borrowing heavily from the British, Brownback placed himself in the tradition of William Wilberforce, the member of Parliament whose Christianity inspired him to end the slave trade, and appropriated the rhetoric of Tony Blair’s post 9/11 speech, saying “America is great because she is good.” Having the most impeccable pro-life credentials in the room counted for a lot and won him third place in the straw poll.

Mitt Romney entered a room full of anticipation. His wife Anne’s presence was no accident. In her bright floral dress, she was warm, accessible, and just plump enough to be all American (unlike, say, Teresa Heinz Kerry). She noted that the Romneys are celebrating their 38th anniversary in a very happy marriage (unlike serial-divorcés Giuliani and Gingrich). With his broad,

shouted a wire reporter, “Ann Coulter just called John Edwards...” She showed me her Blackberry, with the word “faggot” highlighted in the news story. We realized that while she and I were reporting the event, nearly every blogger had already heard this story and given their opinion in the past 20 minutes. We were across the hall and therefore worlds behind the news cycle.

But by that point only the nerdiest student attendees even cared about the candidates anymore. Every properly informed student (excepting Romney’s teetotaling Mormon contingent) was getting ready for Mainefest at Adams Mill Bar—a “legendary event” according to Jane Heeves, a junior at the University of Maine. Lucky for the students, the bouncer seemed unable to identify the ages on drivers licenses far beyond the

Obama's Identity Crisis

Although he presents himself as a healer of differences, the presidential candidate's own racial struggle paints a conflicted portrait.

By Steve Sailer

WHEN CHARLES DE GAULLE paid his first visit to embattled French Algeria after taking power in 1958, he stepped up to the microphone in front of a vast throng of Europeans and Arabs torn by murderous hostilities, stared out at them, and simply announced, "I have understood you." The crowd exulted. Christians and Muslims alike broke into grateful tears. De Gaulle understands us! What more do we need?

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) has yet to attain that level of oracular ambiguity, but his bestseller *The Audacity of Hope* shows this wordsmith's facility at eloquently restating the views of both his liberal supporters and his conservative opponents, leaving implicit the suggestion that all we require to resolve these wearying Washington disputes is to find a man who understands us—a reasonable man, a man very much like, say, Obama—and turn power over to him. The politician has elicited such fervor among many white voters that *Slate.com*'s Timothy Noah runs a regular feature entitled "The Obama Messiah Watch" quoting "gratuitously adoring" articles. (Blacks have tended to be relatively more level-headed about him.)

Early in his run for the U.S. Senate in 2004, Obama's pollsters discovered that women loved him, especially nice white ladies who like personalities more than politics and definitely don't like political arguments. Why can't we all just get along?

Obama has molded himself into the male Oprah Winfrey, the crown prince of

niceness, bravely denouncing divisiveness, condemning controversy, eulogizing unity, and retelling his feel-good life story about how he, the child of a black scholar from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, grew up to be editor of the *Harvard Law Review*.

Gaullism worked out fairly well in France, and so might Obamaism in America. His opposition in 2002 to invading Iraq was sensible and forcibly stated. And Obama was a broadly respected Illinois state legislator from 1997-2005 because he searched out minor good government issues and forged bipartisan alliances with technocrats in the Republican ranks. But a president can't pick and choose his issues with the exquisite selectivity Obama displayed as a backbencher—especially not with judicial nominees. So his record as chief executive would likely prove far more liberal.

As we've seen with George W. Bush, however, pre-election platforms, such as Bush's promise to pursue a "humble" foreign policy, matter less than the inner man. Obama is a particularly complicated personality, so he, and the country, deserve a more frank analysis than he has received thus far at the hands of a starstruck press.

Beneath this bland Good Obama lies a more interesting character, one that I like far better—the Bad Obama, a close student of other people's weaknesses, a literary artist of considerable power in plumbing his deep reservoirs of self-pity and resentment, an unfunny Evelyn Waugh consumed by indignation toward

his own mother's people. He has been hiding out on the bestseller lists for the last two years in his enormously revealing, but little understood, 1995 "autobiography"—a more accurate term might be "autobiographical novel"—*Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*.

When Obama briefly surfaced in the media in 1990 as the first African-American editor of the *Harvard Law Review*, Random House handed him a book contract. Originally, he intended to write a disquisition on race relations, but the puerility of his theorizing discouraged him. He turned instead to writing about what he finds truly fascinating: his relatives and himself.

Obama's gift for restructuring the past into emotionally and aesthetically satisfying patterns made for an uneasy hybrid of fact and fiction, with composite characters, clearly made-up dialogue, and even preposterous dream sequences. Recently, the *Los Angeles Times* revealed that the tale of his one triumph during his four years as a young ethnic activist in Chicago—getting asbestos removed from a public housing project—excluded all mention of the veteran local agitator, Hazel Johnson, who might deserve more of the credit.

Nonetheless, *Dreams* is an impressive book. The abstract lessons he claims to draw from his life aren't memorable, sapped as they are by the pervasive insincerity about race that America demands of its intellectuals, but Obama has a depressive's fine eye for

the disillusioning detail. His characters, real or synthetic, are vivid, and he has an accurate ear for how different kinds of people speak. The book's chief weakness is that its main character—Obama himself—is a bit of a drip, a humor-impaired Holden Caulfield whose prep-pie angst is fueled by racial regret. (Obama has a knack for irony, but of a strangely humorless flavor.)

Why haven't many grasped the book's essence? First, Obama's elegant, carefully wrought prose style makes *Dreams* a frustratingly slow read, which may explain why the book was remaindered in 1995, and why so few of the many who have purchased it following his famous keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention appear to have read much of it.

Second, the plot isn't that interesting: his first three decades are too lacking in incident to make a page-turning story. Obama has led a fairly pleasant existence, with most of its suffering and conflict taking place within his own head as he tries to turn himself into an authentic angry black man.

Third, there is the confusing contrast between the confident, suave master politician we see on television and the tormented narrator of *Dreams*, who is an updated Black Pride version of the old "tragic mulatto" stereotype found in "Show Boat" and "Imitation of Life."

Which Obama is real? Or is that a naïve question to ask of such a formidable identity artist? William Finnegan wrote in the *New Yorker* of Obama's campaigning: "... it was possible to see him slipping subtly into the idiom of his interlocutor—the blushing, polysyllabic grad student, the hefty black church-pillar lady, the hip-hop autoshop guy." Like Madonna or David Bowie, he has spent his life trying on different personalities, but while theirs are, in Camille Paglia's phrase, sexual personae, his specialty is racial personae.

Fourth, his is "a story of race and inheritance," two closely linked topics upon which American elites have intellectually disarmed themselves. In an era when fashionable thinkers claim that race is just a social construct, Obama's subtitle is subversive. Although his expensive education—prep school, an Ivy League bachelor's degree, and then a Harvard professional diploma—has not equipped him with a conceptual vocabulary adequate for articulating the meaning behind his life's story, the details deliver a message that white intellectuals have all but forgotten: the many-faceted importance of who your relatives are.

A racial group is a large extended family, and Obama's book is primarily about his rejection of his supportive white maternal extended family in favor of his unknown black paternal extended family.

For the few willing to read all 442 pages, he offers important testimony about the enduring glamour of anti-white anger. It's a bitter counterweight to the sunny hopes so widely invested in his candidacy as the man whose election as president would somehow help America finally "transcend race."

In reality, Obama provides a disturbing test of the best-case scenario of whether America can indeed move beyond race. He inherited his father's penetrating intelligence; was raised mostly by his loving liberal white grandparents in multiracial, laid-back Hawaii, where America's normal race rules never applied; and received a superb private school education. And yet, at least through age 33 when he wrote *Dreams from My Father*, he found solace in nursing a pervasive sense of grievance and animosity against his mother's race.

Even his celebrated acceptance of Christianity in his mid-20s turns out to be an affirmation of African-American emotional separatism. As I was reading

Dreams, I assumed that his ending would be adapted from the favorite book of his youth, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which climaxes with Malcolm's visit to Mecca and heartwarming conversion from the racism of the Black Muslims to the universalism of orthodox Islam. I expected that Obama would analogously forgive whites and ask forgiveness for his own racial antagonism as he accepts Jesus.

Instead, Obama falls under the spell of a leftist black nationalist preacher, Jeremiah A. Wright, who preaches African-American unity through antipathy toward whites. Reverend Wright remains a major influence on the presidential candidate. (The title of Obama's second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, is borrowed from one of Wright's sermons.) Ben Wallace-Wells notes in *Rolling Stone*: "This is as openly radical a background as any significant American political figure has ever emerged from, as much Malcolm X as Martin Luther King Jr."

The happy ending to *Dreams* is that Obama's hard-drinking half-brother Roy—"Actually, now we call him Abongo, his Luo name, for two years ago he decided to reassert his African heritage"—converts to teetotaling Islam.

Although the biracial Obama is frequently lumped with the multiracial golfer Tiger Woods as evidence of the socially healing power of interracial marriage, their attitudes are quite different. Woods turned down Nike's suggestion that because African-American celebrities are so popular today, he should identify himself solely as black. He didn't want to disown his mother. Woods instead calls himself black and Thai, or, at times, "Caulbinasian," in tribute to his Caucasian, black, American Indian, and Asian ancestors.

From the age of ten onward, though, Obama desperately wants to be black: "I was trying to raise myself to be a black man in America, and beyond the given

of my appearance, no one around me seemed to know exactly what that meant." Honolulu's paucity of African-Americans means he has to learn to be black from the media: "TV, movies, the radio; those were places to start. Pop culture was color-coded, after all, an arcade of images from which you could cop a walk, a talk, a step, a style."

He cherishes every cause for complaint he can discern against white folks. He is constantly distressed at being half-white. Obama says he "ceased to advertise my mother's race at the age of twelve or thirteen, when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites," even though he surely realizes that his media-sensation status stems from how much white people love highly accomplished blacks who speak with white accents. He wouldn't be a serious candidate for president at age 45 if he weren't part black.

Obama's teenage self-consciousness is perpetually crucified by contact with stereotypes about blacks. When his grandmother wants a ride to work because the day before, while awaiting the bus, she was threatened by a black panhandler, he is outraged—at his grandparents. "And yet I knew that men who might easily have been my brothers could still inspire their rawest fears." In high school, he gets upset when "a white girl mentioned in the middle of conversation how much she liked Stevie Wonder; or when a woman in the supermarket asked me if I played basketball; or when the school principal told me I was cool."

The great irony of the book is that so many of the stereotypes about African-Americans and Africans turn out, in his troubling experience, to be true—which doesn't make Obama happy at all: "I did like Stevie Wonder, I did love basketball, and I tried my best to be cool at all times. So why did such comments always set me on edge?" (When he moves to the South Side of Chicago, he eventually dis-

covers that, like his grandmother, he's sometimes scared of black males on the street, too.)

Even the seemingly unique marriage of Obama's parents turns out to be a stereotype, one that was eerily paralleled in John Updike's 1978 novel about a hyper-intellectual African dictator, *The Coup*.

The year before Obama's birth in 1961, his Kansas-born mother Ann Dunham, an 18-year-old student at the University of Hawaii, may have wed fellow student Barack Hussein Obama Sr. Just like Updike's narrator, Felix Ellellou, who bigamously marries a white Midwestern co-ed at their American college in 1959, the senior Obama already had a wife back home in an African village. Obama writes, "In fact, how and when the marriage occurred remains a bit murky, a bill of particulars that I've never had the courage to explore."

Upon graduation, his father was offered a generous scholarship by the New School for Social Research in New York City that would have paid for his family to come with him. Instead, wanting the most famous diploma, he chose Harvard's scholarship offer, even though it provided only for him. And so he abandoned the little boy who would grow up idolizing him from afar.

Just as Updike's Ellellou returned from America to embark on a governmental career in Africa, where he added two more wives to his collection, Obama's polygamous pop went back to Kenya. Obama Sr. took up again with his first wife, married another white American woman, and added a mistress, eventually siring approximately eight children by four women. (The precise number of his offspring remains uncertain as some of his potential heirs long litigated each other's true paternity in probate court.)

Obama's mother married an Indonesian student, and when he was six, they

moved to Jakarta. In his account, she was shocked to discover how her new husband reverted to chauvinist Indonesian ways as soon as he left America and that Indonesia was a nasty right-wing dictatorship (although the latter doesn't jibe with her spending much of the rest of her life in that country). She divorced and sent 10-year-old Barack to live with her parents in Honolulu, while she and his half-sister stayed, off-and-on, in Indonesia.

Despite Obama's relentless efforts to mold himself into an African-American, his overwhelmingly white upbringing is apparent in his coolly analytical depiction of his mother, a portrait that most black men would find disrespectful. To Obama, his mother is a Kumbaya-era liberal. I suspect he feels that she messed up her life due to naïve faith in Third World countries and Third World men; but if she had been wiser, where would he be? This is one of life's conundrums that's hopeless but not serious, and yet Obama can't help being serious about himself.

Years later, when he's working on Wall Street, he's creeped out by his visiting mother's insistence on seeing her favorite film, the 1959 Brazilian art-house classic "Black Orpheus." He belatedly realizes that his very fair-skinned mother is sexually attracted to dark men. He pompously intones, "The emotions between the races could never be pure; even love was tarnished by the desire to find in the other some element that was missing in ourselves. Whether we sought out our demons or salvation, the other race would always remain just that: menacing, alien, and apart."

Wallace-Wells mentions in *Rolling Stone*:

There is an amazingly candid moment in Obama's autobiography when he writes of his childhood discomfort at the way his mother would sexualize African-American

men. 'More than once,' he recalls, 'my mother would point out: "Harry Belafonte is the best-looking man on the planet."' What the focus groups his advisers conducted revealed was that Obama's political career now depends, in some measure, upon a tamer version of this same feeling, on the complicated dynamics of how white women respond to a charismatic black man.

My late mom was also a big fan of Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier back in the 1960s. To her, they embodied an admirable combination of black masculine charm and white gentlemanliness. (In contrast, she thought Muhammad Ali, who is now the more popular representative of 1960s black manhood, an uncultured blowhard.) It sorely disappointed her when blacks burned down Watts in 1965. They were not following the fine example for their race set by Harry and Sidney. She would have liked Barack Obama, too, and for the same reasons.

Nobody uses the term "example for his race" anymore. Today, we say "role model." Even so, what many whites hope, deep down, to accomplish by electing the well-mannered Obama as president is to make him the supreme role model for all African Americans, eclipsing such deplorable bad examples as Al Sharpton, Snoop Dogg, and 50 Cent. Stuart Taylor Jr., a white critic of affirmative action, exulted in *The Atlantic*: "The ascent of Obama is the best hope for focusing the attention of black Americans on the opportunities that await them instead of on the oppression of their ancestors."

The message much of white America hopes to send to black America by electing Obama is: Don't Be So Black. Act More Barack. Perhaps this explains why blacks haven't been all that enthusiastic.

But will the man from Honolulu, who has always worried whether blacks think him black enough, tirelessly demand that African-Americans reform their behavior? And would it make any difference if he did? Few now remember that Jesse Jackson devoted the 1970s to preaching moral self-improvement to blacks, with little evident impact, before moving on to the more lucrative business of denouncing whites in the 1980s.

Back in Hawaii, Obama's grandparents enrolled the fifth grader in the famous Punahou prep school (current tuition \$14,725). With 3,750 students from K-12, it enrolls a high proportion of all the young elites in Hawaii. Illustrative of its financial resources, *Sports Illustrated* ranks it as having the fourth-best high-school sports program in America.

In Obama's book, Punahou was a nightmare of racial insensitivity, with one of his fellow students even asking to touch his hair. What he doesn't reveal is that Punahou was quite possibly the most racially diverse prep school in America. It officially opened its doors to all races in 1851. Sun Yat-sen, the first president of China, attended it in the 1880s.

In Obama's eighth grade class picture, at least seven and perhaps as many as ten of the 21 students are non-white. Brian Charlton of the AP threw some cold water on Obama's adolescent alienation fantasies: "He was known as Barry Obama, and with his dark complexion and mini-Afro, he was one of the few blacks at the privileged Hawaiian school overlooking the Pacific. Yet that hardly made him stand out. Diversity was the norm at the Punahou School, one of the state's top private schools." His classmates say he was a popular and cheerful figure, the opposite of the tortured personality described in *Dreams*, in which he rationalizes his teenage drug use as "something that could push questions of who I was out of my mind..."

When Barack was in high school in the later 1970s, no whites held Hawaii's top elected jobs as U.S. senator or governor. Indeed, as his father pointed out in a 1963 newspaper interview, whites were sometimes the victims of discrimination in Hawaii. Obama also fails to note the charming local custom of calling the last day of school "Kill *Haole* Day."

Like Obama, many Hawaiian residents are the products of mixed marriages: in 1956-57, interracial marriage rates ranged from 22.0 percent for professionals to 43.5 percent for farm workers. There's not much of a one-drop-of-blood rule for defining racial membership in Hawaii that mandated that Obama call himself black and only black.

Why was Obama so insistent upon rejecting the white race?

Perhaps because we all (especially young men) want to belong to something we see as bigger and stronger than us, a winning team. And conquest, who rules whom, is the ultimate team sport.

From adolescence onward, Obama wanted a race to belong to, a team whose accomplishments would reflect well upon him. Of course, it was unthinkable in his liberal white family to take pride in the achievements of his mother's race, so Obama gloried in being part of his absent father's race.

Obama was accepted into posh Occidental College in Los Angeles, which then had a black mayor, Tom Bradley. But Oxy wasn't black enough, so in search of a community to belong to, he transferred to Harlem ... well, to be precise, to that prestigious university on the edge of Harlem, Columbia. (A recurrent theme in Obama's career is Power to the People gestures and Ivy League results.)

After graduation, he moved to Chicago in 1983, finally finding a home where at least some whites reciprocated his antagonism. He worked as an

ethnic activist, helping the impoverished black community wring more money and services from the government. That government money was wrecking the morals of the housing-project residents seems obvious from his book, but Obama never comes out and says it. Numerous white moderates assume that a man of Obama's superlative intelligence must be kidding when he espouses his cast-iron liberalism on race-related policies, but they don't understand the emotional imperative of racial loyalty to him.

Even his one triumph, mau-mauing lazy Chicago Housing Authority bureaucrats into removing asbestos from Altgeld Gardens, is tinged with irony. The timeservers at the CHA are all black, and asbestos would fall comically low on any list of problems plaguing inner city African-Americans.

After four years there, the South Side is worse than ever, with youth violence ratcheting upwards. Obama applies to Harvard Law School (and eventually becomes a discrimination lawyer). Upon acceptance, he makes his first visit to Kenya, where *Dreams from My Father* finally achieves a frankness worthy of its artistry.

Obama immediately appreciates the sweetness of African life in the bosom of his newfound family—"For family seemed to be everywhere ... all of them fussing and fretting over Obama's long-lost son"—but soon discovers its discontents, including how polygamy generates convoluted conflicts too intricate for even the longest-running soap opera. The rival families of his late father—who died in a drunken car crash a half decade before—are still suing each other over his meager estate.

He begins to notice that the intense family ties he'd longed for are not an unmixed blessing for Kenya since they corrupt its culture. Updike makes the same point when the dictator Ellellou

visits the French colonial villa that his most traditional wife had seized and which was now populated by an entire village of his extended family from the Salu tribe:

Nephews, daughters-in-law, totem brothers, sisters by second wives of half-uncles greeted Ellellou, and all in that ironical jubilant voice implying what a fine rich joke, he, a Salu, had imposed upon the alien tribes in becoming the chief of this nation imagined by the white men, and thereby potentially appropriating all its spoils to their family use. For there lay no doubt, in the faces of these his relatives ... that nothing the world could offer Ellellou to drink, no nectar nor elixir, would compare with the love he had siphoned from their pool of common blood.

Most authors who write about African-Americans' social problems appear to know nothing—and don't seem to want to learn anything—about Africans. Our pundits and academics assume that the social history of black Americans traces to that day in 1619 when the first slaves were herded on to that dock in Virginia, but no farther back. We could call it the Black Blank Slate theory.

In refreshing contrast, in Obama's account of race and inheritance, the continuities between Africa and African-America are clear. Kenya seems like an incipient Chicago housing project, preserved only by its inability to afford the welfare state that has ruined the inner city. His aunt's Nairobi home is "just like the apartments in Altgeld, I realized. The same chain of mothers and daughters and children. ... The same absence of men."

Unless they can bribe their way into a prestigious office job, most of Obama's male relatives work as little as

possible, relying on their womenfolk for food and shelter. And the women are looking for what the author's grandfather and uncle Sayid both call a "big man" to ease their burdens with funds extracted from the government. Obama's father, it turns out, had grabbed for the brass ring but wound up a failed Big Man, undone by President Jomo Kenyatta's discrimination against his Luo tribe and by his own alcoholism. Even when impoverished, Obama Sr. pathetically kept playing the Big Man, dispensing gifts he couldn't afford to his relatives and hangers-on.

Now, Obama Jr. is running for the biggest job of all.

On his trip to Kenya last year, he began by lecturing the frustrated audiences not to expect his prominence in Washington to change their lives—"My time is not my own. Don't expect me to come back here very often." But in the slum of Kibera, the crowd's adulation overcame his intellectual defenses and he began shouting joyously, "You are all my brothers and sisters!"

In his head, Obama surely knows that his becoming the world's biggest man would be bad for the work ethic of Kenyans, some of whom would assume America would support them. But in his heart, none of that matters.

For Americans wondering about his fitness to be president, his latest Kenyan trip symbolizes the inner duality beneath his dapper exterior. He possesses one of the finest minds of any politician, but his personal passions routinely war against his acknowledging unwelcome truths, even to himself.

Whether his head or heart would prove stronger in the White House remains unknown, perhaps even to Barack Obama. ■

Steve Sailer is TAC's film critic and VDARE.com's Monday morning columnist.

Leading Men

Hollywood icons begged to serve in a better war.

By Roger D. McGrath

IMAGINE THIS: Tom Cruise, Matt Damon, and Brad Pitt quit Hollywood and enlist in the Armed Forces as privates to fight for Uncle Sam. Inconceivable. But that is exactly what Jimmy Stewart, Tyrone Power, and Clark Gable did during World War II. No actors were bigger stars at the time, nor were there bigger box-office draws. Studio executives were not elated that their stars were enlisting, but the nation was thrilled.

Stewart, Power, and Gable were not alone in kissing civilian life goodbye. Other established actors who served in World War II—many with distinction—included Tim McCoy, Robert Taylor, Gene Raymond, Robert Montgomery, Wayne Morris, Wallace Beery, Robert Cummings, Glenn Ford, Sterling Hayden, Ronald Reagan, Henry Fonda, Mickey Rooney, Robert Stack, Robert Ryan, Jackie Coogan, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Alan Hale, Robert Mitchum, Gene Autry, William Holden, and Eddie Albert. Hayden may have said it best for those who enlisted when he declared, “I don’t want to go on imitating men, and that’s all there is to it.”

Are actors today content with imitating men or is their lack of martial spirit and patriotic fervor a consequence of something else? Polls suggest that most Americans now feel that we were suckered into a fight that was unnecessary, sacrificing the lives of more than 3,200 brave troops. No such controversy existed during WWII. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in a sneak attack, and the next day Congress declared war against Japan. Americans, who had been

opposed to entering a European or an Asian war by an 80-20 majority prior to the attack suddenly rallied to the cause, crying “Remember Pearl Harbor!”

The entertainment industry was as patriotic as the rest of the country: The Andrews Sisters sang “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy”; The Merry Macs, “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition”; Johnny Mercer, “G.I. Jive”; The Song Spinners, “Comin’ In on a Wing and a Prayer”; Bing Crosby, “I’ll Be Home for Christmas”; Dinah Shore, “I’ll Walk Alone”; Ernest Tubb, “Soldier’s Last Letter”; Elton Britt, “There’s a Star Spangled Banner Flying Somewhere.” The silver screen featured “Flying Tigers,” “Guadalcanal Diary,” “Bataan,” “The Fighting Sullivans,” “Gung Ho,” “To the Shores of Tripoli,” “Stage Door Canteen,” “Destination Tokyo,” “Crash Dive,” and “Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo.”

Jimmy Stewart tried to enlist even before Pearl Harbor. He was rejected for being underweight. Standing over 6’3”, he weighed under 160 pounds. The 32-year-old movie star went into training, eating high-caloric foods and drinking vanilla malts. In March 1941, shortly after winning the Academy Award for best actor for his role in “The Philadelphia Story,” Stewart reported for his second physical. “I was ready to take him in a studio car,” said Bill Grady, a casting director. “But he refused to let me take him in a limousine. He went by bus instead. ... I tailed after him. ... I waited, and when a medical officer came out, I asked him if Jimmy had made it. The officer told me he’d made it

by one ounce. What the officer didn’t know was that Jim was so determined to make the weight that he hadn’t been to the bathroom for thirty-six hours! It had been torture, but it had put him over.” Stewart soon emerged, shouting to Grady, “I’m in! I’m in!”

By the end of March, the Oscar-winning movie star was Pvt. James Stewart, temporarily assigned to Fort McArthur in San Pedro. Already a civilian pilot, he was shipped to Moffett Field at the southern end of San Francisco Bay for training with the Army Air Corps. Too tall for the fighters, he hoped to fly bombers. A little more than a month after Pearl Harbor, he earned his wings and was commissioned a second lieutenant. Wearing his Army Air Corps uniform, he served as a presenter at the Academy Awards in February and handed the Oscar for best actor to Gary Cooper for his role in “Sergeant York.”

During the spring of 1942, Stewart had to resist several attempts to make him a public affairs officer. Many in the Air Corps felt he would be of greater value making public appearances than flying in combat. After repeated requests, he got assigned to bomber training, qualifying as a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot by February 1943. Against his wishes, he was kept stateside as a flight instructor, flying both the B-17 and the B-24 Liberator until November 1943, when, as Captain Stewart, he shipped overseas with a squadron of Liberators. Based at Tibenham, 100 miles northeast of London, he became a squadron leader in the 445th Bomb Group. Navigator

Steve Kirkpatrick said Stewart was “a damn good commanding officer. ... I always had a feeling that he would never ask you to do something he wouldn’t do himself.”

Personal accounts of Stewart make him sound exactly like the man we know from the movies: cool, steely nerve coupled with a homespun dry wit. His plane was hit by flak and nearly knocked out of the air on several occasions, but he never failed to put his bombs on target. John Robinson, a crewman in the 445th, described seeing Stewart’s B-24 sitting on the runway and looking like it had been split in half. “The tail of the ship was sticking up in the air and the nose was sticking up in front. Just in front of the wing at the flight deck the airplane had cracked open like an egg. The runway had aluminum scars where the airplane had been dragged. Jimmy Stewart stood by the end of the airplane’s left wing tip. As I walked up

Power joined the Marines as a 28-year-old private in August 1942. He had wanted to join “right after the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor,” but movie contracts interfered. It was while making “Crash Dive” that he decided on the Marines. “I kept stacking them up—the different fellows in uniform,” he said, “and it seemed to me that of those I met the finest type of men were in the Marines.”

In boot camp, Power was challenged to fight by another recruit. “So you’re the big movie star,” the recruit proclaimed. “No, I’m just a private like you,” Power responded. Then the guy took a swing at Power. Bob Workman, who went through boot camp with Power, told me that “Power decked the guy with a quick combination. Power was strong and fast, and could box.”

A drill instructor made a similar mistake, said Workman, when he made a crack about Annabella, Power’s wife. Power told the DI, “You may say any-

his wings and been promoted to first lieutenant.

After completing an advanced instrument flight course at a Naval air station in Georgia, Power was assigned to the Marine air station at Cherry Point, North Carolina, as a pilot of an R5C Curtiss Commando, known more commonly by its Army designation, C-46. The autumn of 1944 found Power flying with VMR-352 out of El Centro, California, and then in January and February with VMR-353, based first on Kwajalein and then on Saipan. He was one of the first to land on Iwo Jima, ferrying in supplies and evacuating wounded Marines under heavy fire. He flew similar perilous missions in the battle for Okinawa, returning home with two Bronze Stars and 1,100 hours as pilot-in-command.

Known as the King of Hollywood, Clark Gable was 41 years old when he enlisted in August 1942 as a private in the Army. “I don’t want to sell bonds,” Gable declared. “I don’t want to make speeches. And I don’t want to entertain. I just want to be sent where the going is tough.” He immediately applied for Officer Candidate School and soon found himself in a course for “ninety-day wonders” at a camp in Florida. His fellow officer candidates initially kept their distance, thinking he must have an awfully high opinion of himself. Sensing the tension, Gable removed his false front teeth and waved them at the other men. “Look at the King of Hollywood,” he laughed. “Sure looks like a Jack now, doesn’t he?” Everyone roared, and Gable was suddenly just one of the guys.

Physically, the 200-pound, muscular movie star sailed through OCS, outperforming men half his age. Academically, he struggled until he decided to treat classroom material like a movie script. While other candidates were sleeping at night, he sat in a toilet stall and memorized page after page of subject matter until he could recite the material. He

GABLE DECLARED, “I DON’T WANT TO MAKE SPEECHES. AND I DON’T WANT TO ENTERTAIN. I JUST WANT TO BE SENT WHERE THE GOING IS TOUGH.”

to him, he looked up at me and said, ‘Sergeant, somebody sure could get hurt in one of those damned things.’”

After 20 combat missions, Stewart was promoted to major and made operations officer of the 453rd. By then he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Croix de Guerre with Palme. He would return home as a lieutenant colonel with 1,800 hours of flight time.

Every American female over the age of 14 was in love with the stunningly handsome Tyrone Power. “Jesse James,” “Johnny Apollo,” “A Yank in the RAF,” “Blood and Sand,” “The Mark of Zorro,” “The Black Swan,” and a dozen other movies left the gals swooning. Leaving the glamour of Hollywood behind,

thing you like about me, and I’ll take it, but my wife is off limits.” When the DI persisted, Power decked him. To the DI’s credit, he did not report the incident.

Workman, who was later badly wounded on Tarawa, said Power quickly proved himself to be “one of the guys.” The famous actor was soon serving as right guide of his platoon and calling cadence like a seasoned DI. He graduated as platoon Honor Man.

Since Power had earned superior ratings in training and was already a licensed private pilot when he entered the Corps, he was sent to OCS at Quantico after boot camp. Commissioned a second lieutenant in June 1943, he was then sent to an accelerated flight-training course. By April 1944, he had earned

finished OCS in the top quarter of his class and, at the request of the other candidates, delivered the graduation address. After commissioning, Gable spent several more months training at gunnery schools. Having spent years hunting and shooting skeet, he excelled as a gunner and was promoted to 1st lieutenant by the end of January 1943.

Gable deployed with the 351st Bomb Group to Polebrook, England, some 80 miles north of London. His arrival was announced first by German radio broadcasts, which said that he would be welcomed in Germany when his plane was shot down. Hitler had a large collection of American films and had stated more than once that his favorite actor was Clark Gable. While Gable was mostly of German descent, he was also part Irish.

Gable's first mission was almost his last. Then a captain, he was in charge of a film crew aboard a B-17 bombing German-occupied Belgium. When a Focke-Wulf fighter fired on the B-17, a 20mm shell blew the heel off of Gable's boot and missed the actor's head by inches. On his fourth and fifth missions, he replaced wounded gunners and got a chance to fire back at the enemy. By October 1943, he had shot thousands of feet of film and had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Returning to the United States in November, he was stationed at "Fort Roach" in Culver City and made training films until his discharge in June 1944.

It is difficult to imagine the actors of today doing what Stewart, Power, and Gable did, but given the right war—one with a Congressional declaration and without deception, misrepresentation, and ambiguity—Cruise, Damon, or Pitt might just surprise us. At least, I would like to think so. ■

Roger D. McGrath is an historian in California and the author of Gunfighters, Highwaymen and Vigilantes.

Band of Brothers

American troops fight less for democracy than for the men next to them.

By Stewart Nusbaumer

MOSUL, IRAQ—"That's a day I'll never forget," Private First Class Addis says slowly, gently rubbing his M16 rifle.

Three weeks ago, when driving through Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, PFC Addis steered his Humvee around a big pothole and pile of garbage and right into the full blast of a roadside bomb. "It was a loud-ass boom and then everything went dark. When I woke up, I said, 'I don't want to die.' I know that sounds really selfish."

We are sitting outside my military quarters on an Army cot under a warm, soothing sun. The gloomy winter darkness and dampness has only recently passed; the searing summer heat has yet to arrive. This is the best weather in Iraq. But for Private First Class Addis, this is the very worst time, probably in his entire life.

"I immediately knew Sergeant Borea was dead," the young 1st Cavalry Division soldier says slowly, each word pulsating with agony. "He was missing a big chunk of his body. Terp [the interpreter] was hanging out—both legs were gone. One of Sergeant Casitillo's legs was barely attached."

Nicholas Addis, now 21, was born in Galesburg, Illinois and later moved to Chicago. He looks several years younger. With light freckles, clear eyes, and soft features, he has a classic all-American face. What you first notice, however—what you cannot help but first notice—is a dark red mark on the side of his nose. Tiny, yet obvious, it is an unnatural

imposition on his unblemished face. Shrapnel wound, he says—adding that he was also wounded in the shoulder.

When your platoon sergeant is killed, your interpreter has both legs blown off, your fire team leader has one leg amputated, and you, the driver of the vehicle, get off relatively easy—well, you haven't gotten off relatively easy. Survivor's guilt is a haunting, ruthless wound, a cruel demon that stalks and terrorizes the mind.

"I'm the only one walking around," he says rocking back and forth on the cot as his eyes remain fixed straight ahead, "but I'm the one without a wife and kid. Mind if I smoke, sir? People say I should be happy that I'm not dead." His voice trails off into pain too deep to speak.

"You see these things on TV," he stops in mid-sentence. "I used to have expensive clothes and all that, but I don't care about that stuff anymore."

There are several dull thuds, probably incoming mortar rounds landing somewhere on this sprawling U.S. Army base, called Forward Operating Base Marez. If only one loud boom, normally that is EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) blasting a cache of captured ordnances—not an unusual occurrence here. A few short bursts of small arms fire occasionally flare on the perimeter wire. Few soldiers pay much attention to any of this.

In Iraq, the main weapon of death and destruction is the IED (Improvised Explosive Device), which grows in both

number and intensity. IEDs are usually placed on roads. According to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, they have caused approximately 70 percent of U.S. casualties in Iraq. This means that nearly 3,000 American military personnel and contractors have been lost to IEDs. One of those killed was Sergeant First Class Russell P. Borea.

"He was a really good guy, I miss him," says PFC Addis. "We looked sort of alike, so they gave us nicknames." The corners of the Addis's mouth curve up and slowly push out a smile. "I was Mini Rue, he was Papa Rue. He was a father to me."

WITH EYES LOCKED, HE HAS **THE THOUSAND-YARD STARE**, WHICH COULD JUST AS WELL BE CALLED THE MILLION-MILE STARE. **HIS EYES SEE NOTHING BECAUSE HIS MIND SEES SO INTENSELY.**

He gazes across the low rolling hills of brown dirt and rocks, past the perimeter wire and guard towers, beyond the buildings and streets of Mosul in the far distance and sees absolutely nothing. With eyes locked, he has the thousand-yard stare, which could just as well be called the million-mile stare. His eyes see nothing because his mind sees so intensely.

Col. Stephen Twitty, commander of the U.S. Army's 7th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division in Mosul, tells me that those who plant IEDs are mostly unemployed young Iraqi males. "We need to provide them with employment, with skilled jobs," he says, "we need to get factories up and running, get stores open. That will take care of much of the problem."

Yet there have been only 120 projects, costing \$102 million, for the reconstruction of the entire Ninewa Province, and most of the effort has gone into short-term programs, such as

building wells. "What is needed is an infusion of money for long-term employment," Colonel Twitty says.

"Sergeant Borea was a good soldier," Addis says as he slowly rocks back and forth, rubbing his rifle. "All he cared about was teaching other soldiers—even those not staying in the Army." Another smile peeks through, "He just wanted to help everyone to become a better man. Good father figure, he cared for everyone, a great man. I want you to write that, sir. And he had a family, a wife and child." The PFC hesitates, and then, in nearly a whisper—I strain to hear the words—"I wish it was me."

Survivor's guilt has pushed Addis from "I don't want to die" immediately after the bombing to "I wish it was me." For three weeks, wrenching questions that cannot be answered have bombarded his mind. Why did Sergeant Borea die? Why did I live? He has a family and I don't—why him and not me?

Addis's eyes brighten: "Sergeant Casitillo was another good guy, my team leader." (Fire teams are composed of four soldiers and are the smallest unit in the military.) "When we were in the hospital I couldn't sleep, so I went to his bed and held his hand all night. When he woke up we tried using sign language, but we couldn't understand each other." Another smile struggles out. "The nurse got us pen and paper, and the first thing he asked was about Sergeant Borea." The PFC's eyes narrow. "I was the one. I was the one that had to tell him Sergeant Borea didn't make it." He looks away again.

"I would like you to write the Borea and Casitillo families are always in my prayers. And Terp's family, he paid the same as us."

I ask softly, "You ready to go home?"

"No, I don't want to go," he responds quickly, throwing me a quick glance. "Sir, why would I want to leave my brothers behind?"

"Well, I thought—"

"I would feel so guilty if I left—Sergeant Borea would say that. He wouldn't leave his guys."

"Yeah, but you've been through a—"

"Sergeant Casitillo said to me when medevacked out, 'We're brothers for life.' Sir, I want to stay right here with my brothers."

A shiver rips down my spine. I turn away as water forms in my eyes. I turn toward the rolling hills of brown dirt and stones, the perimeter wire and guard post, the buildings and streets of Mosul, and I see none of it.

The words "loyalty" and "sacrifice" are used ubiquitously in America, by self-assured pundits, by self-proclaimed patriots, in ordinary malls and in all kinds of bars, everyday, everywhere. When one young American soldier in Iraq doesn't use the words but believes whole heartedly in their meaning, I'm suddenly emptied of every word I ever knew.

Several quick thuds; the mortars hit closer this time. I barely hear them. I'm thinking of the weapon of destruction and death in Iraq. I'm thinking PFC Nicholas Addis will soon return to the lethal streets of Mosul, and I will soon return to the safe streets of America. I'm wondering when I steer around a big pothole back home, what I will think—I'm thankful that my front-end alignment is still good? How about, I don't want to die? ■

Stewart Nusbaumer is embedded with various Army and Marine units in Iraq.

Diary of a Mad Man

Holden Caulfield, the first alienated preppeie

By Peter Wood

PIECES OF WHAT became J.D. Salinger's first novel appeared in *The New Yorker* in the late 1940s, and the completed *The Catcher in the Rye* lurched into the American imagination in 1951. The narrator is a smart, sensitive, 17-year-old named Holden Caulfield, who tells about the three days after he flunked out of Pencey, an expensive Pennsylvania boarding school. He takes a train home to New York City but wanders the city instead of going to his parents' Upper East Side apartment.

The Catcher in the Rye has become a little classic: always in print, still widely read, assigned in thousands of English courses and festooned, like Holden in his peak-turned-backwards red hunting cap, with showy appendages. Today, you can buy a spiral-bound *The Catcher in the Rye* Activity Pack or the Cliff, Spark, Max, York, Pan, Routledge, Barron's, and Bloom's crib notes. At any given moment, some school district is weighing the decision to flunk Mr. Caulfield's little memoir out of its library.

Those censorious school boards put a spring back into Holden's step. His book is 57 and he's pushing 73. That's a long career as America's disappointed, alienated, angry scourge of all things phony. One might think that Holden would appear a little quaint to today's readers. He counts it the height of sophistication to get a cocktail at a bar. Recreational drugs are an unglimped horizon. He treats girls as individuals with lives of their own and disdains the smooth-talking cads only looking to score. The age of "friends with benefits" and "hooking

up" is as remote from his sensibility as condom ads on TV. Come to think of it, Holden Caulfield never even saw a television. He is busy sneering at what we think of as high-brow art: "You take Sir Laurence Olivier, for example. I saw him in Hamlet. ... I just don't see what's so marvelous about Sir Laurence Olivier, that's all." Holden doesn't like movies (they are phony) or theater ("you got dizzy watching people sit down and stand up").

He tries to erase a "F--k you" that someone had scribbled on the wall at his little sister's grade school ("It drove me damn near crazy.") because the kids would see it and "wonder what the hell it meant." These days, those kids can recite 50 Cent and Eminem exhausting the English vocabulary for rhyme words on copulative acts.

Holden reads Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, Ring Lardner novels, Thomas Hardy, and Isak Dinesen. Today, he would be in a "gifted and talented" class rather than booted from his third prep school.

His social attitudes are decidedly antique. He calls homosexuals "flits" and flees into the night when a former professor pats him on the head. He's boorish when a friend tells him he has a Chinese girlfriend. "No kidding! She's Chinese, for Chrissake?" Multiculturalism has yet to dawn in Holden's universe.

And yet Holden Caulfield is one of us. Though he fantasizes about heading off into the woods and living in a cabin, he is no Huck Finn, lighting out for the

territory. Huck chaffed under the artificialities of "sivilization," but he wasn't disdainful of other people. Holden can barely find another person who deserves his respect. His life, at least in the days of *The Catcher in the Rye*, consists of a nonstop litany of denouncing almost everyone he meets or remembers as "phony." The "almost" here matters: Holden makes distinctions. His dead brother Allie, his younger sister Phoebe, imaginary children whose innocence he protects, and some nuns he meets in a diner pass the test. No one else lives up to Holden's standards—including himself.

He may not have been the first angry young man in American literature, but he arrived as the herald of a new kind of anger. It defines him. Holden is pretty much a personified sneer. Before *The Catcher in the Rye*, such characters were found in American fiction, but they were treated as silly and contemptible. Holden, however, is the protagonist, and we are meant to admire him. His contempt for American life is a badge of something worthy: his relentless pursuit of authenticity.

His constant word of condemnation is that people are "phony." This doesn't mean that they are hypocrites and dissemblers. Holden's discernment goes deeper. Any slight suggestion that a person does not wholly live up to his public image is phoniness, and phoniness is for Holden a violation of the way things should be. He likes children because they are what they seem. The adult world, in which we deal with

complexity and ambiguity elicits his righteous scorn.

Before New Anger came on the scene, Americans almost universally embraced an ethic of self-restraint in the face of provocation. Children were taught that giving over to anger was babyish and that a good person sought to resist the impulse to burst forth as self-destructive and harmful to others. Of course people got angry anyway, but they did so in a culture that didn't celebrate anger as rich, empowering, and rooted in a quest for personal authenticity. An exception existed for anger channeled into a moral summons. The abolitionist movement and the temperance movement were plenty angry, but the anger was also tightly controlled and focused.

That plainly contrasts with a culture in which anger has become both a lifestyle and an ambient condition. We now have a society in which a great many people feel entitled to be angry because they have built their lives around some permanent and unappeasable grievance. Prosperous African-Americans, high-status celebrity homosexuals, rich white businessmen, feminist writers with tenured professorships and best-selling books, illegal immigrants enjoying wages and social benefits far beyond what they had at home are joined by their sense of grievance. Their patented resentments receive an official certificate of authenticity in contemporary America.

And down at the bottom of the deed, in a flamboyant scrawl, is the signature of Holden Caulfield, one of the founding fathers of New Anger.

After I had written these thoughts, I went for a winter's walk in Central Park and found myself sitting on a bench by the lagoon. A seedy-looking older fellow was standing nearby, looking out on the black water. Suddenly he turned and asked, "Say, do you know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over?"

I stared. "Holden? Is that you?" Suddenly things fell into place. The long vanishing act of "J.D. Salinger" made sense. Salinger, who last published a story in 1965, has supposedly been living in seclusion. But what if there was no J.D. Salinger? What if "Salinger" was just a Caulfield prank, and in 1965 Holden had just retired his pseudonym, along with the actor he hired to play the Salinger part in interviews? "Holden Caulfield," of course, isn't the real Holden Caulfield's name either, but I don't want to expose him to the publicity that he has so long avoided. Holden did, however, agree to answer some questions over drinks at a nearby bar.

Q: Mr. Caulfield—may I call you Holden? "Mr." seems so, you know, phony—

You probably hate the phrase, but you were basically a child star. When you published your memoir, you were just 17. The book was a huge success and people have kept reading it. Every now then some school board takes it off the library shelves, and you're a celebrity all over again. What accounts for the longevity of *The Catcher in the Rye*?

A: First, would you care for a cocktail? On me. I'm loaded. I'm having a scotch and soda.

The book. I wrote it for the psychoanalyst guy that my parents sent me to after I flunked out of old Pencey Prep. Funny. They had me back as commencement speaker last year. Can you believe it? I flunked every course I ever took at Pencey except English. I went because I thought it would be a gas. And it really was, although it was kind of sad too, if you know what I mean.

But I was going to tell you about the book. What crap. I think it caught on for all the wrong reasons. Remember that part where I told about going into old Ernie's club in Greenwich Village? Ernie was this big fat colored guy who could

really play the piano. He was a snob, too. You could tell by the way he'd make these humble, phony bows. Anyway, what I said about Ernie in the book is that if you're so good that you get all that attention, you're bound to become a phony because you don't even know anymore if you're playing right or not. Old Ernie could stink it up and still sound good, so he didn't know anymore if it was really good.

That's what the bastards do to you. If you don't watch it, you start showing off. I tried to tell the story just like it happened. Maybe I got a little bit of it, and people recognized that little bit as true and then turned the book into something like the goddamned Bible for Alienated Youth. You sure you don't want a scotch and soda?

Q: No thanks. So the reason *The Catcher in the Rye* kept selling is that you told a truth that no one else was telling?

A: No. It was like my old English teacher Mr. Antolini told me, there were lots of guys—historians, and poets mostly—who told the truth, but I just didn't know it. I thought I was the first one, except maybe for my brother DB and my sister Phoebe—she understood things—to see how phony everything is. I think people were just sort of shocked that a kid would notice. And I was just a kid who wondered where the ducks in Central Park went when the pond froze over. Have you figured that out yet?

Q: Aren't you being fake humble like Ernie the piano player?

A: No, it's true. I was a kid, still kind of shaken up by my brother's death and doing lousy in every school my parents could get me into. I knew I could describe stuff, like when I wrote that essay for my roommate, Stradlater, and described Allie's baseball mitt. But I didn't intend to write a goddamned masterpiece.

Q: Who was J.D. Salinger?

A: Oh, that was a great joke. Salinger was the biggest phony this side of Hollywood. This guy thought he was all Existentialist and Buddhist and all that crap. I thought it would be a gas to put his name on the story that the shrink made me write down. The Fictional Character. That's what Phoebe used to call me.

Q: Do you sometimes feel fictional?

A: Like some character in a book? No. I'm my own author. Other people are characters in my story.

After I dropped that Salinger crap, my brother DB got me a job in Hollywood working on scripts. I didn't do whole scripts. But when they were having trouble with an angry scene, I'd get rid of the phony stuff and make it real.

Q: But I thought you hated Hollywood...

A: I do. That's what so funny. Hollywood is all phony but it turns out they know it so they need people like me to make it less phony.

Q: So what scripts did you doctor?

A: Hundreds of them. You've seen some of my stuff in "Five Easy Pieces," "A Clockwork Orange," "Apocalypse Now." I forbid them using my name. Putting your name up there is where the phoniness begins. Anyway, I didn't work just in film. You've seen my work elsewhere. The "Yippie Manifesto" for the 1968 Democratic Convention? "Rise up and abandon the creeping meatball!" That was me.

Q: Any recent work?

A: I've been doing writers workshops for the next generation. You've heard of

some my students. Augusten Burroughs—you, know *Running with Scissors*, about his parents signing him over to his shrink who then molests him? And you know James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*? Jim's my protégé.

Q: Didn't he invent a fake memoir?

A: He didn't invent it. I did. And it's authentically fake, not phony.

Q: I don't get the distinction.

A: If it's authentically fake, it's real. All great literature is authentically fake. The real King Lear was probably some old geezer running around looking for his false teeth. Shakespeare made him authentically fake. Phoniness is sticking to the facts when you know the facts don't tell the real story.

Q: So you are more concerned with inward truth than mere facts?

A: It's not so much inward vs. outward as authentic vs. phony.

Q: What did you think when Mark David Chapman, the guy who shot John Lennon, was arrested at the scene paging through *The Catcher in the Rye*? He claimed to have modeled his life on yours. He told police, "I'm sure the large part of me is Holden Caulfield." And he later explained that he thought that killing Lennon, who he said was a "phony," would turn him into Holden Caulfield.

A: I never shot anyone. I don't have the guts. As I said in the book, "I'd rather push a guy out the window or chop his head off with an ax than sock him in the jaw."

Look, I get angry, but I'm not responsible for every lunatic that reads my book and thinks he's me.

Q: True, but the book does have a certain appeal to alienated kids. I remember reading somewhere that it's "one of the few novels that even the most chronically-stoned and voided-out ninth grader will actually read."

A: First, it is not a novel. Second, the kids who read it recognize that what I was saying is still true. The world is full of phonies. That doesn't mean they should shoot the phonies.

Q: So are you happy about the way things turned out?

A: I never really settled down. Married a bunch of times, had some kids. But marriage is so phony. And I didn't want to raise my kids the way I was raised. They were free to do what they wanted. And what they wanted was to stay with their mothers, which was good. I love them and all, but it was better at a distance. I was just born too soon. The '60s were awesome, but I was already in my 30s by the time Woodstock came along. I liked the innocence, and the sexual revolution was great, but there were a lot of phonies in the so-called counterculture. I hated those SDSers, trying to turn everything into politics. I hated it when people like Susan Sontag praised "campiness." Ironical praise of phoniness—can you believe it? I just wanted to be me.

Q: What about the rest of the culture?

A: I look at all this crap—*Cliff* god-damned *Notes for Catcher in the Rye*—and I want to puke. It's so phony. You'd think a college kid could read a little story like that without some pretentious jerk telling him what every other sentence means.

Q: The culture?

A: I don't get involved much in politics. I liked old Bob Dole. "Where's the outrage?" That's the spirit. Where's the god-damned outrage? I don't have much use for these current politicians. They're all phonies. But I'll tell you one thing I like. It's those bloggers. They know where the outrage is. And if one of them gets it wrong, all the others pile on and tear him apart...

When I got home I tried to check on Holden's story, and I just can't tell. Wikipedia says J.D. Salinger was a real person and that Holden Caulfield was just a character he wrote about. *The Catcher in the Rye* disguises names and places, so it's hard to tell for sure if it was a true story. The "Holden Caulfield" I met in Central Park looked the right age. On the other hand, New York City is full of people pretending to be someone else.

Perhaps it's best to leave this unresolved. Holden Caulfield at 73 is a man who, more than most, can look around him and see a city, a people, even a nation that has at last caught up with him. If he were a proud man, he could take satisfaction in having inspired us. His rich mixture of qualities—disdainful sensitivity, lethargic self-regard, whiny unhappiness—are now our qualities. If the pursuit of authenticity now trumps respect for others, Holden Caulfield deserves some of the credit. If we turned aimless adolescent anger into a lifelong cult of being pissed-off, Caulfield should receive some of the votive offerings. If we prefer America awash in vulgarity and rudeness to one trapped in the smug and stale conventions of civility, we ought to thank Holden Caulfield for helping to light our way. ■

Peter Wood is provost of The King's College in New York City and the author of A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now.

Beg Pardon

Conservatives fall over themselves to defend the fall guy.

By Justin Raimondo

NO SOONER HAD THE VERDICT in the trial of Scooter Libby been announced than the cry went up from the neocons: "Pardon him!" In a *National Review* editorial that made little reference to the parade of witnesses contradicting Libby's assertion that he had learned of Valerie Plame's covert status from Tim Russert, the whining reaches such a high pitch that only the 12 or so remaining neocons will be convinced by it.

According to *NR*, only "partisans" were interested in finding out who leaked CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity—such as Fitzgerald, whose interest in partisan politics is absolutely nil. Ah, but in translating neocon-ese into simple English, it is necessary to don our special glasses and see the world through neocon eyes: what "partisan" means, in this context, is something altogether different than merely Republicans and Democrats. The party at issue here is the War Party. Anyone opposed to their agenda is "partisan" by definition.

Libby's troubles weren't the result of his lies: no, it was all the fault of "a scandal-hungry media," the CIA, and "political cowardice"—this last referring to the Bush administration. Apparently the Justice Department, including John Ashcroft, was in on the anti-neocon conspiracy: it was they, after all, who "caved" to the demand for an independent investigation of Libby's antics. According to *NR*, the vast conspiracy to get Scooter apparently reached from the far left wing of the Democratic Party to the highest echelons of the Bush

administration itself—this in the same editorial that characterizes former ambassador Joe Wilson, Ms. Plame's husband, as "paranoid."

What is distinctly odd for an ostensibly conservative publication is the disdain with which the editors treat the security and career of someone who served her country for 20 years. Plame's status as a covert agent—reportedly involved in tracking weapons of mass destruction—is described in terms that are openly disdainful: she was "supposedly vulnerable," and the editors state unequivocally that she "wasn't 'covert.'" How do they know this?

Former CIA spokesman Bill Harlow told the grand jury that he strongly warned Novak against publishing Plame's name and said that she had not had not been responsible for sending her husband to Niger. According to a piece by Walter Pincus and Jim Vanderhei in the *Washington Post*, "he did not tell Novak directly that she was undercover because that was classified." An article by Murray Waas in *The American Prospect* cites two government officials who told the FBI that Novak was "asked specifically not to publish the name of undercover CIA operative Valerie Plame. ... The two officials told investigators they warned Novak that by naming Plame he might potentially jeopardize her ability to engage in covert work, stymie ongoing intelligence operations, and jeopardize sensitive overseas sources."

National Review raises the Richard Armitage red herring, averring, "the true insanity of the situation was withheld

from the public until years later, when we learned that, long before the Justice Department had appointed Fitzgerald, it knew who had leaked to Novak. Early in the investigation, deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage informed investigators that he had told Novak about Mrs. Wilson. ... But like the savvy bureaucratic infighter that he is, Armitage kept quiet publicly, allowing the vice president's office to take the heat for something he had done."

This business about Armitage being Novak's source is irrelevant since, unlike Scooter, Armitage didn't commit perjury and wasn't part of a concerted effort to discredit Wilson. Armitage, in short, did not break the law, therefore he was not prosecuted.

"Reasonable people," *NR* says, "can conclude that it was only Scooter Libby's imperfect memory—not willful deception—that gave rise to the charges of lying under oath and obstruction of justice." How "reasonable" could these people be if they still deny that Scooter lied after no less than nine witnesses, including Dick Cheney's own public spokeswoman and a former White House spokesman, testified that Scooter had discussed Plame's CIA job prior to his conversation with Russert? We are supposed to believe Scooter's version over the nine because, no doubt, they're all part of the vast conspiracy to bring down Scooter, Cheney, and the War Party.

If the editors of *NR* had their way, there would have been "no referral, no special counsel, no indictments, and no trial." It doesn't matter to them that U.S. national security was compromised. What matters is that the neocons' insularity was breached. In the end, the editors blame President Bush for his "failure to unify his own administration"—which, translated into plain language, means his failure to purge the government of any and all critics of his war

policies. Never mind truth, we need "unity" above all. A more succinct summary of the neocon creed could hardly be conceived.

NR hauls out Bill Bennett, of all people, to defend his fellow neocon, and what we get is the same tiresome mantra about "the criminalization of politics." But what kind of "politics" is it that targets a covert CIA agent and treats American national security as expendable? In an odd convergence of views, fans of Philip Agee, the CIA agent turned radical leftist—whose revelations resulted in the death of several covert agents—and the "Free Scooter" crowd sing pretty much the same tune.

Bennett also repeats the tired talking point that the underlying crime was "never charged." But as Fitzgerald pointed out in his initial press conference, Libby wasn't charged with violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act or the Espionage Act precisely because of the smokescreen he—and Cheney—created around their activities: "What we have when someone charges obstruction of justice, the umpire gets sand thrown in his eyes. He's trying to figure what happened and somebody blocked the view."

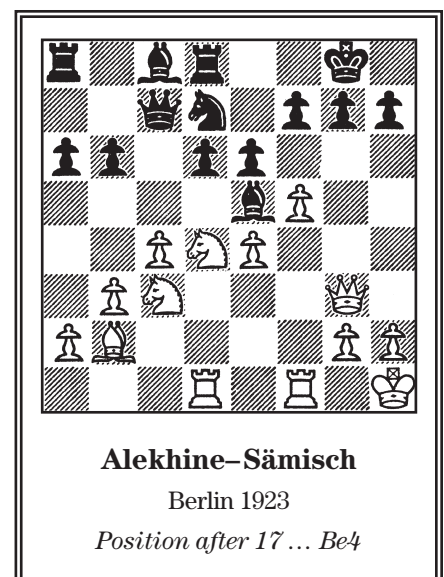
The feds didn't get Al Capone for ordering murders or engaging in extortion—of which everyone knew he was guilty—but tripped him up on charges of tax evasion. In Libby's case, a different sort of mafia was caught red-handed and was disposed of by filing lesser charges—an efficient, effective, and perfectly legitimate way to deal with the sort of political gangsterism represented by Libby.

In the most outrageous defense of Libby to date, Bennett declared that "if your spouse's position is of such a classified nature that disclosure of her position would put her job in jeopardy, then don't write a political op-ed in the *New*

York Times." In other words: if they dare to contradict the neocon party line, CIA personnel and other government employees operating covertly must live in constant fear of exposure, not by their foreign enemies, but by their own superiors in government. Let this serve as a warning to any CIA employee who dares dissent from the view that Iran is on the verge of developing nukes and is somehow responsible for the failure of our efforts to stabilize Iraq. Your career and your family may be at risk.

To read this in the pages of a publication that once smeared several writers and editors of this magazine as "unpatriotic conservatives" is ironic indeed. What kind of a patriot justifies outing a CIA agent in the name of the agenda of a secretive clique that employed illegal means to advance its agenda within the government? Theirs is a patriotism that owes its allegiance, not to the country, but only to themselves. ■

Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com and author of An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard.



Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Amazing Grace*]

The Scourge of Slavery

By Steve Sailer

SINCE 1991, conservative film critic Michael Medved has been pointing out that R-rated films do worse at the box office on average than family fare, but Hollywood keeps making more R-rated films than financial logic would suggest.

Billionaire Philip F. Anschutz, a devout Presbyterian, has been placing large bets on the family-oriented film business recently, hitting it big with "Ray" and huge with "The Chronicles of Narnia." Anschutz's latest, "Amazing Grace," the biopic of the amiably saintly William Wilberforce—the evangelical Anglican member of parliament who battled for two decades to abolish the slave trade before finally succeeding in 1807—won't match their returns, but it's a worthy and intelligent (if not quite exceptional) effort.

It features a fine cast of British stage actors, including such high-class hams as Albert Finney as Wilberforce's religious mentor John Newton; Michael Gambon as his Whig parliamentary ally; the old sinner Charles James Fox; and Ciaran Hinds as Lord Tarleton, chief bribe-dispenser for the slave interests. Unfortunately, the three look rather alike, exacerbating the difficulty of deciphering the subtle political maneuvering.

The budget for "Amazing Grace" was limited enough that not much of the horror of the slave trade could be

shown. Instead, we watch Wilberforce talking about it, eloquently, with the abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and Oloudah Equiano, the Nigerian-born ex-slave who published a bestselling autobiography in 1789.

The film's historical accuracy is above average. One forgivable slip is that while Newton, a former slave trader who repented, did indeed pen the great hymn's words—"I once was lost but now am found, Was blind, but now, I see"—his verses weren't joined to the current melody of "Amazing Grace" until 1832.

Also understandable is casting handsome Welsh actor Ioan Gruffudd as Wilberforce, although he was actually only 5'3" due to curvature of the spine and almost blind to boot. Still, Gruffudd's looks sap the romantic tension, just as casting the exquisite Keira Knightley as the sensible Elizabeth Bennett in the most recent version of "Pride and Prejudice" undermined that famous story. "Amazing Grace" is organized around the night the 20-year-old titian-haired beauty Barbara Spooner (Romola Garai) fell in love with the 37-year-old Wilberforce as he told her the story of the political struggle in which he'd ruined his health. On screen, though, it seems inevitable that they will marry since they are the two most beautiful people in England.

Unfortunately, complex historical stories like this are better suited to the leisurely pace of the television miniseries because a two-hour film has to leave out much. For instance, "Amazing Grace" fails to mention that Wilberforce was a Tory or that his religious enthusiasm was quite unfashionable during the deistic Enlightenment.

Moreover, banning the slave trade in 1807 made the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in the 1830s relatively

painless. The West Indian sugar planters had routinely worked their slaves to death and thus needed fresh slaves from Africa to prosper. In contrast, slaves multiplied on the less harsh tobacco and cotton plantations of America, so slave owners still thrived after Congress ended the trade in 1808.

Contemporary audiences so lack historical knowledge that veteran director Michael Apted and writer Steven Knight decided that there's no point in even trying to make clear who is whom in the film. For the first hour, for example, no effort is made to explain who Wilberforce's best friend Billie (played by Benedict Cumberbatch) is, or why in the world Billie thinks (correctly) that he can become prime minister at age 24. He's just some guy named Billie who is prime minister for two decades. Explaining that Billie's father, William Pitt the Elder, had been the dynamic prime minister during the Seven Years War would only annoy the public, so why bother?

The Cheap Labor Lobby that plagued Wilberforce has hardly vanished. The government of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. possession in the Pacific, paid disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff \$9 million to persuade former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay not to let the House crack down on its guest-worker program under which tens of thousands of Asian women were imported to toil in sweatshops within barbed wire enclosures. Some who became pregnant were forced to have abortions by their employers. Others were assigned to bordellos.

Now the Bush administration wants to create new guest-worker programs for the American mainland. But where is our Wilberforce? ■

Rated PG for thematic material involving slavery, and some mild language.

BOOKS

[*Fame Junkies: The Hidden Truths Behind America's Favorite Addiction*, Jake Halpern, Houghton Mifflin, 226 pages]

All that Glitters

By Dana B. Vachon

IN HIS BOOK *Fame Junkies*, Jake Halpern offers a consistently well researched and at times breathtakingly Felliniesque portrait of modern American celebrity obsession. This is a madhouse society, hopelessly removed from any of its natural origins, hopelessly consumed by artifice. It is also the temple in which so many of us worship, perpetually prostrate to an ever-growing pantheon of false gods. At his best, Halpern pushes aside the velvet curtains of fame's sacristy, where we witness its full college of lonely, petrified, self-loathing cardinals—then realize that we are staring in a mirror.

The Oz-quest begins with a look into the modern sideshow world of "American Idol"-fueled talent conventions. There is a whole circuit of them, and every now and again they do discover a real star, like gifted thespian Ashton Kutcher. Mostly they entice hopeful children from working-class families to direct thousands of dollars and hours toward the one-in-a-million dream of endless happiness and universal love. It's rather like heaven, only you don't need to die to be reborn.

Halpern sneaks into the largest of these conventions, the International Modeling and Talent Association, and meets hordes of children who, after only a decade on the planet, have decided that they cannot bear another moment of anonymity. "I'd like to be a celebrity," one hopeful says. "I'd like the whole deal. I see these celebrities on TV who don't like their picture getting taken, and I can't understand it. I want it all. I want the money, I want the women, I want the

publicity, I want people hounding me to take my picture."

I was asked to audition for a Cheerios commercial in 1983. My parents refused me this opportunity, and on some level I have always held it against them...

Make no mistake about it, America was not always like this. Halpern suggests that the "Free to Be You and Me," school of curriculum designers who dominated the post-Vietnam era tried to create parades of shiny, happy people but instead only outfitted legions of unabashed narcissists. It is an interesting but arguable point, and the book's treatment of anthropology as an explanation for fame culture is its strongest analytical suit: early hunters were bred to adulate great hunters, to emulate them and learn from them. At one time, this drive was essential for the survival of the species; now it is essential only for the survival of "Survivor." Technology is not a savior in this case but an enabler. It has been 700 years since the invention of glasses, 172 since the invention of the camera, and 116 since Edison's popularization of the projector. Our humanistic drives have quite paradoxically birthed an inhuman world, a cold and deforming place where...

I thought someone was playing a big joke or doing performance art when I first saw those pictures of Britney shaving her head. The up-skirt shots were one thing. But everyone's done the up-skirt thing and frankly no one has any hair down there anymore anyway, so it's not even that jarring. But this was quite something else. The look in her eyes as she stared herself down in the mirror! Everyone else in town is getting coiffed and extended for the Oscars and this chick is just giving herself the old Marie Antoinette! Of course, the French needed the sans culottes to shave the heads of their royalty. Our royalty self-deposes. How's that for cocktail banter? By the way, did you see her body? A knotted, used-up, functional body. And it's not that she had kids. Anna Nicole

Smith had kids and even got huge, but she got her figure back. I think our stars owe us that much. They are like our national theatre troupe. The funny fat ones ought to stay funny and fat, and the pretty nymphettes ought to stay alluring and young. As long as they do that, we'll do our part. Has anyone read a nasty obituary for Anna Nicole? Sancto subito, eh!

Sorry, where was I? Right. Jake Halpern's book. Well, it's a very good book. Hang on, let me just regain my bearings. Okay. Ready. Here we go. How vile and despicable is this fame industry, which makes all of us its enablers! Everyone talks about the social contract, but who among us has actually seen any papers? We're barged from the start by the Academy Award winners and the *Star* magazine editors and every single "E! True Hollywood Story." Halpern is right when he says that for all of our inalienable rights no modern American is allowed ignorance of Paris Hilton, and we'd be calling for her head if she wasn't so firmly inside of ours.

As the book develops, we see how aspirers to fame are themselves victims of a great Ponzi scheme, which produces walk-on soap opera roles and Follies commercials but dissolves completely when asked to deliver true stardom. Fame's cherubic choirs quickly become wounded flagellants. We meet Dean Johnson, an MBA who left his job in the healthcare sector for a new sort of American dream. Now in his late 30s, Johnson is personal assistant to Tiffani Amber Thiessen. Johnson is not alone, and there is in Hollywood a fully functioning Association of Celebrity Personal Assistants. "I'm proud of my ability to lose myself, and do whatever I have to do, even at the risk of health or sanity," Dennis Hopper's assistant tells Halpern. Equal parts Horatio Alger and Mark David Chapman, this small population underscores the identity-corroding effects of an artifice-obsessed society that cannot pull its eyes off the cameras, klieg lights...

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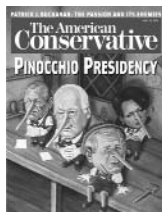
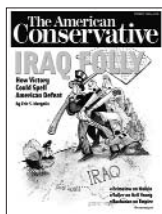
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Where did she get the wig? You go from Marilyn Monroe to Anna Nicole Smith to this bald lunatic in her Spencer's Halloween wig. The genuine article begets the poor man's article begets the lunatic's vision. But damn if it wasn't just beautifully scripted, right down to the babbling about how she was "sick of being touched." The hair is going for a million dollars on eBay. I don't think George Washington's hair is worth that much. Then again, not too many people have entertained sex fantasies about George Washington in the past decade, have they? He wore a wig, too. But no latex. I loved the red latex catsuit from the "Oops! I Did It Again" video. She was dating Justin Timberlake then and said she was a virgin. She's no longer a virgin. But I wonder if she still has that catsuit? That was seven years ago. That's an eternity. How come none one else out there seems to have gotten so old, so fast?

"When I was young, I had no idea I was pretty," the yesteryear actress Liz Fraser tells Halpern toward end of his book. He has come to visit her at The Fund, a retirement home for actors and actresses financed by the Motion Picture Association of America. A picture of Fraser's former self hangs on a wall in the communal dining hall, but on most days she cannot bear to look at it. "It gets frightening when you see yourself back then," she says. "I got to a certain age, and I realized: You had it—you had it all." The Fund is filled with others like Ms. Fraser. They pause in attention when Robert Guillaume of "Benson" fame enters the room. They hold out hope for a late-life Oscar. They audition for bit parts on "Star Trek" spin-offs.

It is here, at the pasture for bit players, that the book reaches its highest and fullest form. Close to death and far from exaltation, this last troupe of actors effect a play in which the reader can perhaps fathom the conscience of his own society. Here the elderly dream not of heaven but of finally making it. We marvel at how fully the latter has usurped the former. We wonder how we

came to this place. What is it about the dream of universal love that...

It will take months for her hair to grow back. Either that or she'll get extensions. But didn't she say she was shaving off the extensions in the first place? They say she is in rehab, but rehab from what? What's the difference between rehab and a mental hospital? And if there isn't any, what's the difference between rehab and a retirement home? All of this will probably be good for old Kevin Federline. That Superbowl commercial was hilarious...

"Look at yourselves, you camera-flashed fools," this book seems to be saying. "Look at what you've made and what you are. Look at what you want! Eternal life and youth and beauty and love? You'll never get them. You're no less blind and fervent than the madrasah students, and no more likely to get what you're after. What does it matter if their virgins live in the afterlife, and yours live in Malibu? You'll both be torn apart in hot pursuit..."

Britney? I wouldn't touch her; not now. I can't get the bald pictures out of my head, and she just seems like a very different person than the latex Britney of my youth. Reese Witherspoon looked amazing at the Oscars. She's had two kids, but she takes care of herself...

There is a gorgeously Kubrickian feel to this book, as Halpern demonstrates how the tools of fame have in some sense taken charge of their creators. It's always and everywhere. Constant. Most of us don't stand a chance. Most of us are bound to blindly embrace something these days...

I'm not sure why I couldn't stop reloading the video. I shook my head and cradled the laptop and watched it again and again. There's something about these pictures, you know? There is something about all these pictures of all these people. Something not so lonely. Something warm and familiar. ■

Dana B. Vachon writes from New York City.

[*Great Expectations: The Troubled Lives of Political Families*, Noemie Emery, John Wiley & Sons, 246 pages]

Founders, Strivers, and Slackers

By Georgie Anne Geyer

ONE COULD BE FORGIVEN, after reading this engrossing book, for wondering whether it's better to be born the son of an incurable Las Vegas gambler or a rebel leader in Sri Lanka than the son of an American president. At least you could rebel against daddy and surely no one would tell you incessantly what you had to do in the world. Anything, in fact, but to be born the son of an American president and submitted to the ultimately vesuvian destructiveness of too many great expectations!

As Noemie Emery says toward the end of her book, which traces America's presidential "dynasties" from 1775 to today, our country has seen 230 plus years of dynastic ambition. Taken together, four families—the Adamses, Roosevelts, Kennedys and Bushes—have given us seven presidents, three vice presidents, five senators, four governors, four ambassadors to major foreign powers, and four members of the House of Representatives. No slackers they. To Emery:

This sounds impressive, and is, until the downside is counted: one certain and one probable suicide, multiple deaths in what can be called young adulthood, numerous lives either warped or distorted, and more alcoholics and drug users than one can easily count. ... All were in politics because of their fathers and families, and all belonged to that small group of people, beginning with John Quincy Adams at the birth of the country, who had been raised to believe they ought to be president, and if they weren't, they in some sense had failed.

"Success was in that room," Emery avers, "but there also was darkness, the result of a mixture of pressure and privilege, of ambition passed on second-hand."

This is the story that Emery sees as she looks at America's dynastic families. And hers is a compelling view, gratefully unencumbered by too much ideology or theology. She examines five major American presidents from family dynasties (Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush) and the often Shakespearean and on occasion "Saturday Night Live"-worthy interplay among them. She shows how the sons "of whom much is expected," as Churchill famously put it, instead have so often fallen by the wayside, overburdened by their families' hopes and exhausted by the demands of privilege. She unweaves the tense and often tormented skeins of the families with a skilled historian's eye and the devilishness of the good psychiatrist. Soon enough, you find yourself happy she isn't yours.

THE KENNEDYS CALLED THEMSELVES A "CLAN" OR NATION. THE ADAMSES ACTUALLY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES AS A "RACE."

The sublimely moral Adamses? Of six sons in two generations, four accomplished little, and three were downright dissolute. Teddy Roosevelt's boys? Teddy always believed that his cousin Franklin had stolen Ted Jr.'s chance at the presidency, and his second son, Kermit, shot and killed himself with his service revolver. The great Franklin Delano Roosevelts? "The Roosevelt boys," Emery writes, "cheerfully looted their family legacy." The Kennedys? We all know the great tragedies, but then there were the seemingly endless smaller tragedies, like David Kennedy's dying at 29 from a drug overdose. The Bushes? Well, let's leave them until later.

When Emery uses her delicious, gossipy, yet not unsympathetic style to analyze the "whys" of all of these dim

failures, especially in light of the great expectations that they all early faced, we get a valuable look at America's dynastic political families *in toto*. We see, for example, that these families have an amazing number of characteristics in common. Emery demonstrates through her own sociological *Buddenbrooks* of American dynasties that each moves through three major stages of increasing privilege and declining effect. First, the founders: John Adams, Joe Kennedy. Then, the privileged strivers: John F. and Robert Kennedy, George W. and Jeb Bush. Finally, and saddest of all, the inheritors, typified by the next generation of Kennedys, "who coast along in the wake of the strivers' efforts, and it is here," according to Emery, "that the rot—and the problems—set in."

We see also how each family assumes that its members deserve to lead the country, insulates itself in unity against the rest of the world, and has even thought of itself as something other than a "family." The Kennedys called themselves a "clan" or nation. The Adamses

actually thought of themselves as a "race." In the dynastic family, says Emery, "each member is expected to find personal fulfillment in advancing the family goals. ... The family is sometimes seen as a fighting force, almost at war with the universe. Unconditional surrender is the goal." In another part of the book, she speaks of "quasi court-martial, followed by shunning when somebody fails or flunks out. Disloyalty to the family, regarded as treason, is heavily punished."

And then there is the internal competition—physical, political, and psychological. According to Emery, "Theodore Roosevelt led children and guests on obstacle courses that were exhausting and dangerous. The playing fields of Hyannis became an American version of

Eton's—a trying locale for the building of character. ... What went on in the Kennedy compound was not very different from what went on at Walker's Point in Maine, where the large, driven Bush clan went for its revels," and where it's credo, "that life was essentially broken down into a series of competitions that had to be won at all costs," emerged.

Which brings us to the Bushes, a more modern, more mercantilist, more exploring kind of dynasty, and a family that may well go down in the history of great expectations, despite the first President Bush's admirable administration, as the one real failure among America's dynastic families. Emery tells the now well-known story of how "little George"—George W.—was, from childhood, always expected to be second to his far more intellectual and capable brother, Jeb. George W. tried to excel but always fell short of his father's accomplishments. And just as John Kennedy had done in the shadow of Joe

Jr., his older brother, George W. Bush, says Emery, "began to concoct a rebel persona and for much the same reason: to depreciate the standards he wasn't sure he could meet." As he grew into adulthood, he dreamed of a big oil strike he christened "the Liberator" that would free him from financial and family strains. But it was all make-believe. Drinking, carousing, insulting people, he was becoming, as Emery puts it, "an embarrassment, a study in failure."

Then in 1985, the 39-year-old George W. happened upon the Rev. Billy Graham in Maine, with whom Emery says he found "the antidote to the dynastic dynamic and its ongoing pressures and claims"—namely, faith. And faith, she says

posed a new set of standards. If the dynastic creed claimed ambition was everything, faith said there was something above and beyond it. If the dynastic creed measured a life by public accomplishment, faith said there were other ways of proving one's value. If the dynastic creed said he had disappointed his earthly father and mother, faith maintained that there was a still greater father in heaven, in whose eyes he had worth.

Therein lay the magical metamorphosis of George W. Bush.

Great Expectations suffers because Emery's assessment of the second Bush's presidency is too equivocal, considering the fact that his administration has eroded America's civil liberties, squeezed America's middle class, and refused to end a disastrous war that couldn't be won in the first place. But Emery does make an excellent comparison of Father Bush's view of the world and George W.'s. Here she quotes Jeffrey Bell of *The Weekly Standard*:

There is an alternative Bush I view of the world that is now engaged in a death struggle with Bush II. It has a micro, not a macro, interpretation of what happened on 9/11. It sees Osama and Islamism as lim-

ited and aberrational. It mildly supported the invasion of Afghanistan, but would favor no other significant military actions, backing mainly police actions geared toward catching Osama. ... In the Islamic world, Bush I favors economic development through trade and internal, top-down reforms. While it does not oppose attempts to achieve democratic reforms in Islamic countries, it has little hope that this will be much of a factor in the immediate decades ahead.

And that is just about right. For the prodigal son, who in the second half of his life hates his father's moderation and rationality, this is pure poison. At the tips of George W.'s fingers are now stretched glory, empire, revenge, unfettered power, and the rebuke of his old friends who never appreciated him enough anyway. Anyone who reads Emery's book will have no doubt whatsoever that George W. Bush, the single most unexpected president of all of the dynastic families, will never, ever give up on his glory-filled dreams—which may be the greatest American tragedy of all to come out of all of these intense family stories.

So many interesting questions. Will George W. Bush take us into a regional or world war, spurred on by his early feelings of inadequacy? Will women like Hillary Clinton become the new stars of the dynastic galaxy? Or is it time we get tough, mount the American Coliseum, and give thumbs down to the "great dynasties"?

You can bet which way Noemie Emery tends. "Public life as an option," she says, "to be picked up at will or discarded, is one thing, and not always a bad one. But great expectations, pushed too hard with too little regard for individual difference, have given us desperate men." ■

Georgie Anne Geyer is a nationally syndicated columnist and the author of Guerrilla Prince: The Untold Story of Fidel Castro.

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[*Modern Liberty and the Limits of Government*, Charles Fried, W.W. Norton, 217 pages]

Own and Be Free

By David Gordon

CHARLES FRIED is unusually well qualified to write about liberty. He is not only a distinguished lawyer who has taught at Harvard for 35 years and served as solicitor general, but a professional philosopher as well. Fried's goal in *Modern Liberty* is excellent: he wishes to defend individual liberty against leftists and others who, avid in pursuit of competing values, cast aside our traditional rights. But in the book he has set himself a problem that he cannot solve.

In order for individuals to have robust rights of liberty against the state, they must have property rights. If the state can without restraint control the disposition of property, personal liberty becomes meaningless. Of what value is freedom of speech, for example, if the state controls all newspapers and books?

Here lies the problem. Having concluded that property rights are entirely creatures of the state, Fried cannot logically defend them. He thinks that all property is conventional—that property rights exist solely at the discretion of the state. Fried fully recognizes that this view of property strikes at the heart of his defense of liberty, but he sees no way to avoid it. He resists this conclusion, which he dislikes, and though his struggles with himself throughout the book are very engaging, they never result in the problem being solved.

Fried sets the stage for *Modern Liberty* with several arresting cases, one of which is Quebec's "flat prohibition against buying or selling private health insurance for services that can be obtained from the public health system." The public health service might be impeded if private doctors were allowed to compete with it. Once the decision has been made to have a public system,

is it then justifiable to institute this prohibition? Fried claims that it is not. Individuals who do not wish to participate in the public health plan are compelled to do so; if they wish to avoid the public service, they must either leave Quebec or do without medical care altogether.

Is it not unfair to enlist individuals against their will in such a venture? Fried maintains that an individual's right to make choices, and bear responsibility for them, is of essential importance. But what future for the freedom of those who want a public health service? Do we not have to balance the freedom of the system's proponents with the freedom of its antagonists, and if so, should not the will of the majority prevail?

According to Fried, the existence of the public system is not at issue, for even if a public health system enjoys majority support, allowing people to make alternative arrangements does not thwart the majority's will. Rather, the issue is whether the majority, or anyone else, can compel members of the minority to embrace a system they reject.

IF THE **STATE** CAN WITHOUT RESTRAINT **CONTROL THE DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY**,
PERSONAL LIBERTY BECOMES MEANINGLESS.

Fried generalizes his point. Supporters of public health systems want equal medical care for everyone, but too often the pursuit of equality has disastrous consequences for liberty:

Equality is so important that ... not only liberty, but every other good thing, should be enjoyed only to the extent that it may be enjoyed equally. ... This demands leveling down—deliberately hurting some people, without helping others—if that is the only way to come closer to equality. This was Pol Pot's project as he emptied the cities of Cambodia and killed or drove into the fields the educated and most prosperous townspeople; equality as a Great Pyramid.

This is where Fried's defense of liberty runs aground. His logical next step should be an argument for property rights, but because he believes that they cannot exist independent of the state, he cannot take that step.

Why does Fried defend a view of property that cuts so much against the grain of his libertarian instincts? He has been overly impressed by an argument advanced by Thomas Nagel and Liam Murphy in their book, *The Myth of Ownership*. (Nagel, one of the foremost American philosophers, is one of four friends to whom Fried dedicates his book.) Nagel and Murphy claim that it is incoherent to think of property rights existing apart from a government that institutes them. People own things, they say, only in a legal structure of rules, which gives them certain powers over those things. The government, in establishing this structure, need not conform to supposed natural rights to property and is free to make rules governing property ownership however it wishes since no property titles exist

independent of the government. People cannot rightly complain that the government has taken "their" property, no matter how highly they are taxed: they own property only by the government's permission.

This argument's flaw is apparent if one considers the following situation. Suppose a law is enacted that forbids criticism of the government's foreign policy. Someone complains that this law interferes with freedom of speech. "Your argument overlooks a fundamental point," a defender of the law responds. "Freedom of speech presupposes a structure of laws within which people have the right to speak. Without a system of laws, your supposed right is meaningless. Your objection to the new law has no basis."

Indeed, the exercise of free speech presupposes laws and regulations, but it hardly follows from this that the government can limit people's speech as it pleases. The view that people have a natural right to free speech, independent of the government, is not defeated by noting that to exercise speech, laws are required. In this view, the required laws must respect people's pre-existing rights.

In like fashion, Nagel and Murphy's point does not rule out the view, held by the Founding Fathers and philosophers from John Locke to Robert Nozick, that people have a natural right to acquire property. The defense of this right does not depend on one's appeal to a mythical "state of nature." Rather, the claim is that once people acquire property, in accord with long established legal precedent and custom, the government simply may not interfere with it. Property exists within a system of rules, but it does not follow that the government may restrict and tax property as it pleases.

Nagel and Murphy, and Fried following them, conclude otherwise, having made the obvious mistake of generalizing from an undoubted fact. Some property titles do rest on no more than the decisions of ruling authorities. (How far down to the sea does the right to beachfront property extend? One must simply choose some rule and stick to it.) But it hardly follows from this and similar instances that all property claims rest on the government's sufferance. Much less does it follow, as Nagel and Murphy astonishingly claim, that it is conceptually incoherent to challenge their position.

If only Fried had seen this! He clearly does not like Nagel and Murphy's argument and sees that it can be readily extended to destroy all personal rights:

[Cass] Sunstein sees in American free speech a parallel to the moral and conceptual confusion that leads people to complain that taxes are a burden because they take "my" wealth. Our free speech regime assumes a background of general laws of property and conduct that tell me what is mine and

that allow me to sell, trade, or give that property away.

Because free speech depends on this background, Sunstein thinks that the government may regulate its exercise. Fried wishes to avoid this conclusion, so inimical to the liberty he defends, but he accepts the premise that leads to the unwelcome result. He is reduced to urging that the government act with caution and use its power of granting property rights to give everyone an adequate sphere for free action. He should instead have exposed the emptiness at the heart of the argument against property rights.

Fried's confusion about property weakens his case for liberty. His lapse returns us to the case of Quebec, whose restrictions on private medical practice Fried opposes as an undue infringement of liberty. Individuals should not, he argues, be compelled to enlist in public health plans they oppose. But Fried does

HE IS REDUCED TO **URGING THAT THE GOVERNMENT ACT WITH CAUTION AND USE ITS POWER OF GRANTING PROPERTY RIGHTS TO GIVE EVERYONE AN ADEQUATE SPHERE FOR FREE ACTION.**

not think that liberty is similarly infringed when one is taxed against his will to pay for Quebec's public health system:

Compare my examples with measures that impose taxes and spend revenue on the usual range of government functions. At both the taxing and the spending ends of that process, there are always people who would do it otherwise, but only the most extreme among them claim that these forced contributions deprive them of their liberty.

He cannot grasp that individuals have a right to what they have earned, independent of the state. Had he done so, he would hardly think it extreme to liken taxation to forced labor. Fried's friend Robert Nozick memorably defended this view in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Here, in Fried's eyes, he is apparently an extremist

whose arguments need not be mentioned.

Despite his blind spot over property rights, Fried deserves praise for his defense of individual liberty against egalitarian assaults. But his defense is incomplete: he allows the state to decide the conditions under which people are fit for freedom. He opposes, for example, the Supreme Court decision that allowed the Old Order Amish not to send their children to high school. (The Amish opposed, for religious reasons, anything beyond an eighth-grade education.) Fried thinks that those without sufficient education cannot make meaningful use of their liberty. "Children," he maintains, "must be brought to a certain point of intellectual competence if the notion of free choice is to have meaning." So much for parental rights: children must be coerced to be free through forced education.

Fried's defense of freedom is welcome, but it does not go far enough. He tells us that he wants to do for our time

what Hayek did 60 years ago, "but without the apocalyptic thunder, with full acknowledgement of the good things the post-New Deal world has done for almost everyone." Fried, one suspects, has not fully resolved in his own mind the issues about which he writes. His struggles with these issues, as he entertains one side of an argument and then another, make *Modern Liberty* much more interesting than it would have been if presented single-mindedly. The book ranges widely; topics as diverse as the nature of love and language rights come in for attention. Fried could with justice apply to himself the epigram that he quotes, but wrongly ascribes to Martial instead of Terence, "nothing human is foreign to me." ■

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Sizing Up Suitors



This is a grim time for those of us who would like to see team America do well. We are tied in Afghanistan, but we've been playing defense and

have been pushed back to our own 20-yard line since the start of the second half. In Iraq, we are two touchdowns behind at the start of the fourth quarter. We have no Peyton Manning, and the referees have been paid off by the home team. Only a miracle will save us from certain defeat.

The homefront is no better. Next year's elections are bound to be a disaster for patriotic conservatives like myself, which means the neocons will have a fresh start to once again con the incoming crowd.

Hillary Clinton—she's dropped the Rodham now that it suits her to be simply Clinton—makes my skin crawl. If I have to look at that smug, bloated, power-crazed face for another 8 years nightly on the idiot box, I will seriously think of moving to Grozny. She was and remains a socialist, and if you believe what she says while trying to get elected, you are the type that believed her hubby when he said he never had sex with that woman. (What he should have done is what JFK would have done: told the same whopper but with a wink and a smile. End of story).

Barack Obama sounds very exotic, but he is an unknown quality with a very liberal voting record. His only claim to instant fame is his skin color. Just because a part-black man has obvious charisma and is soft-spoken and decent, is it enough to make him president? Why not pick an even nicer guy like Colin Powell?

Democrats' third-best hope, the hard-left lawyer now posing as a centrist,

John Edwards, was good at screwing money out of tobacco companies—not necessarily a bad thing—but would he be any good at trying to run the vast bureaucracy that is the American government nowadays? I don't think so.

Which brings me to the Republicans. I'll start with the present leader in the polls, Rudy Giuliani. There's something of the night about him, have no illusions. Yes, he did fix New York City, as he and his fans tell us at every opportunity and then some. Yes, he's arrogant and a bully, but those things have never stopped one from being a good leader of men. But he's more Richard III than Henry V, and now we're at a time when the latter is needed.

NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS ARE BOUND TO BE A DISASTER FOR PATRIOTIC CONSERVATIVES LIKE MYSELF, WHICH MEANS THE NEOCONS WILL HAVE A FRESH START TO ONCE AGAIN CON THE INCOMING CROWD.

I also have somewhat of a personal problem with the mayor. About ten years ago, I wrote a spoof column about the Puerto Rican Day parade that had some busybodies screaming for my head. Then Giuliani got involved. He told a press conference that he would look into it and have me deported. The fact that I am an American citizen never entered his mind (which was concentrated on getting Puerto Rican votes). He then threatened to boycott Conrad Black's newspapers unless he fired me. What great defender of free speech

demands the firing of a poor little Greek boy at the drop of a hat? As someone wrote in an English paper at the time, anyone who is for bringing in more Puerto Ricans to go on welfare while deporting a non-welfare recipient like Taki has to be wrong.

Things ain't lookin well, folks. A twice-divorced Catholic who looks and smells of Savonarola may be the next president, but don't bet on it. People who look like undertakers win in Romania but in these here United States? I'm not so sure. Mind you, if a congenital liar like Clinton made it, why not his lying wife or Giuliani? Well, Clinton was a bubba. Giuliani is Inspector Javert, without the latter's propensity to jump in the water out of guilt.

John McCain is obviously a very good man and a patriot, but he no longer has the fire. Gone is the ebullience of the past. Iraq has ruined the Bush presi-

dency and McCain's candidacy. He appears farther away from the White House than ever.

My favorite, of course, is Mitt Romney. He is a Mormon, which I would be if I could choose my religion, but the Christian Right in cahoots with the neocon cabal will put a stop to his candidacy. Romney is no one's gofer, and that spells trouble. Big corporations like their candidates to play ball. Alas, look for Romney to bow out early. Too bad.

A gloomy forecast indeed. ■



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